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# IN QUEST OF VALUE

*San Jose State College Associates in Philosophy*

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# IN QUEST OF VALUE

Readings in Philosophy  
and Personal Values

Selected by

*San Jose State College Associates in Philosophy*



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# Preface

THIS BOOK of readings purposes to provide the student of philosophy, on whatever level of college or university study, with source selections that will familiarize him with the dominant philosophical and ideological trends in today's Western world. The selections are drawn from essays that consider Science and Human Values, from Existentialist writings, from the works of Ethical Relativists, Linguistic Analysts, Liberals, Pragmatists, Naturalists, Psychoanalysts, Neo-Thomists, and Marxists.

Introductions that head the selection groups have designedly been made brief. The aim has been to provide only a minimum of interpretation, editorial guidance, analysis, and appraisal, thus to leave such matters chiefly to the student and his instructors in the classroom. A corollary purpose may also be realized, namely, formation of a personal value-outlook by the student.

In this day and in the presence of the values and powers of natural science, it is more than ever necessary that the use of these far-reaching instruments for good and evil be given an intelligent and humane direction. The mastery of a science in itself does not provide such direction. Only through acquaintance with the value fields, applied and theoretical, are the appropriate sensitivities likely to be developed in human beings. Without such sensitivities, a person is an easy prey for those who would misuse him as a human being. Without such sensitivities, he is hardly more than an automaton to be manipulated by those who are in a position to pull the levers.

No thoughtful person can go through life without committing himself to a set of personal values, without relating himself through a value-orientation to his cultural environment, without awareness of the alternatives in the philosophical arena today which, in the language of William James, constitute "genuine options." This awareness can only have the

effect of making more reasonable and more tolerant men and women. In a day when unreason and intolerance are all too common, this book may hopefully contribute in some measure to bringing about that result.

FREDERICK C. DOMMEYER

IN QUEST OF VALUE



# Science and Human Values

SCIENCE AND human values are related in various ways.

(1) Certain scientific theories, it is claimed, have important implications for traditional moral problems. The most noteworthy, perhaps, is the claim that psychoanalysis has important consequences for the perennially fascinating problem of determinism and free will. If, as some writers suggest, "rational" decision is simply a facade for unconscious determinism, what becomes of man's freedom to choose alternate courses of action?

(2) Technological applications of science have created severe new cases of moral problems—e.g., those flowing from the threat of atomic disaster and from the economic worries of automation. Bertrand Russell asks one of the most pertinent questions in all present-day philosophy—do we have the sense to save ourselves from such scientific achievements?

(3) Though we think of the scientific enterprise as objective, factual, and far removed from value considerations, some writers in philosophy stress that science itself has commitments and requires decisions of an evaluative sort just like any other rational enterprise.

For a view of how some contemporary thinkers deal with these themes, turn to the selections which follow.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

DEWEY, JOHN. *A Common Faith*

HUXLEY, JULIAN. *Evolution in Action*

NEEDHAM, JOSEPH, ed. *Science, Religion and Reality*

OTTO, M. C. *Science and Human Value*

PLANCK, MAX. *The Universe in the Light of Modern Physics*

RUSSELL, BERTRAND. *The Impact of Science on Society*

RUSSELL, BERTRAND. *The Scientific Outlook*

WHITEHEAD, ALFRED N. *Science and the Modern World*

WIGNER, E. P., ed. *Science and Human Values*

JOHN HOSPERS

## Free Will and Psychoanalysis\*

... A METROPOLITAN newspaper headlines an article with the words "Boy Killer Is Doomed Long Before He Is Born,"<sup>1</sup> and then goes on to describe how a twelve-year-old boy has just been sentenced to thirty years in Sing Sing for the murder of a girl; his family background includes records of drunkenness, divorce, social maladjustment, epilepsy, and paresis. He early displays a tendency to sadistic activity to hide an underlying masochism and "prove that he's a man"; being coddled by his mother only worsens this tendency, until, spurned by a girl in his attempt on her, he kills her—not simply in a fit of anger, but calculatingly, deliberately. Is he free in respect of his criminal act, or for that matter in most of the acts of his life? Surely to ask this question is to answer it in the negative. ... Though not everyone has criminotic tendencies, everyone has been moulded by influences which in large measure at least determine his present behavior; he is literally the product of these influences, stemming from periods prior to his "years of discretion," giving him a host of character traits that he cannot change now even if he would. So obviously does what a man is depend upon how a man comes to be, that it is small wonder that philosophers and sages have considered man far indeed from being the master of his fate. It is not as if man's will were standing high and serene above the flux of events that have moulded him; it is itself caught up in this flux, itself carried along on the current. An act is free when it is determined by the man's character, say moralists; but when there was nothing the man could do to shape his character, and even the degree of will power available to him in shaping his habits and disciplining himself to overcome the influence of

\* From "Meaning and Free Will," by John Hospers, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* X (1950) 316-330. By permission. Footnotes renumbered.

<sup>1</sup> *New York Post*, Tuesday, May 18, 1948.

his early environment is a factor over which he has no control, what are we to say of this kind of "freedom?" Is it not rather like the freedom of the machine to stamp labels on cans when it has been devised for just that purpose? Some machines can do so more efficiently than others, but only because they have been better constructed.

It is not my purpose here to establish this thesis in general, but only in one specific respect which has received comparatively little attention, namely, the field referred to by psychiatrists as that of unconscious motivation. In what follows I shall restrict my attention to it because it illustrates as clearly as anything the points I wish to make.

Let me try to summarize very briefly the psychoanalytic doctrine on this point.<sup>2</sup> The conscious life of the human being, including the conscious decisions and volitions, is merely a mouthpiece for the unconscious—not directly for the enactment of unconscious drives, but of the compromise between unconscious drives and unconscious reproaches. There is a Big Three behind the scenes which the automaton called the conscious personality carries out: the id, an "eternal gimme," presents its wish and demands its immediate satisfaction; the super-ego says no to the wish immediately upon presentation, and the unconscious ego, the mediator between the two, tries to keep peace by means of compromise.<sup>3</sup>

To go into examples of the functioning of these three "bosses" would be endless; psychoanalytic case books supply hundreds of them. The important point for us to see in the present context is that it is the unconscious that determines what the conscious impulse and the conscious action shall be. Hamlet, for example, had a strong Oedipus wish, which was violently counteracted by super-ego reproaches; these early wishes were vividly revived in an unusual adult situation in which his uncle usurped the coveted position from Hamlet's father and won his mother besides. This situation evoked strong strictures on the part of Hamlet's super-ego, and it was this that was responsible for his notorious delay in killing his uncle. A dozen times Hamlet could have killed Claudius easily; but every time Hamlet "decided" not to: a free choice, moralists would say—but no, listen to the super-ego: "What you feel such hatred toward your uncle for, what you are plotting to kill him for, is precisely the crime which you

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that the theory presented below is not accepted by all practicing psychoanalysts. Many non-Freudians would disagree with the conclusions presented below. But I do not believe that this fact affects my argument, as long as the concept of unconscious motivation is accepted. I am aware, too, that much of the language employed in the following descriptions is animistic and metaphorical; but as long as I am presenting a view I would prefer to "go the whole hog" and present it in its strongest possible light. The theory can in any case be made clearest by the use of such language, just as atomic theory can often be made clearest to students with the use of models.

<sup>3</sup> This view is very clearly developed in Edmund Bergler, *Divorce Won't Help*, especially Chapter I.



yourself desire to commit: to kill your father and replace him in the affections of your mother. Your fate and your uncle's are bound up together." This paralyzes Hamlet into inaction. Consciously all he knows is that he is unable to act; this conscious inability he rationalizes, giving a different excuse each time.<sup>4</sup>

We have always been conscious of the fact that we are not masters of our fate in every respect—that there are many things which we cannot do, that nature is more powerful than we are, that we cannot disobey laws without danger of reprisals, etc. Lately we have become more conscious, too, though novelists and dramatists have always been fairly conscious of it, that we are not free with respect to the emotions that we feel—whom we love or hate, what types we admire, and the like. More lately still we have been reminded that there are unconscious motivations for our basic attractions and repulsions, our compulsive actions or inability to act. But what is not welcome news is that our very acts of volition, and the entire train of deliberations leading up to them, are but facades for the expression of unconscious wishes, or rather, unconscious compromises and defenses.

A man is faced by a choice: shall he kill another person or not? Moralists would say, here is a free choice—the result of deliberation, an action consciously entered into. And yet, though the agent himself does not know it, and has no awareness of the forces that are at work within him, his choice is already determined for him: his conscious will is only an instrument, a slave, in the hands of a deep unconscious motivation which determines his action. If he has a great deal of what the analyst calls "free-floating guilt," he will not; but if the guilt is such as to demand immediate absorption in the form of self-damaging behavior, this accumulated guilt will have to be discharged in some criminal action. The man himself does not know what the inner clockwork is; he is like the hands on the clock, thinking they move freely over the face of the clock.

A woman has married and divorced several husbands. Now she is faced with a choice for the next marriage: shall she marry Mr. A, or Mr. B, or nobody at all? She may take considerable time to "decide" this question, and her decision may appear as a final triumph of her free will. Let us assume that A is a normal, well-adjusted, kind, and generous man, while B is a leech, an impostor, one who will become entangled constantly in quarrels with her. If she belongs to a certain classifiable psychological type, she will inevitably choose B, and she will do so even if her previous husbands have resembled B, so that one would think that she "had learned from

<sup>4</sup> See *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, Modern Library Edition, p. 310. (In *The Interpretation of Dreams*.) Cf. also the essay by Ernest Jones, "A Psycho-analytical Study of Hamlet."

experience." Consciously, she will of course "give the matter due consideration," etc., etc. To the psychoanalyst all this is irrelevant chaff in the wind—only a camouflage for the inner workings about which she knows nothing consciously. If she is of a certain kind of masochistic strain, as exhibited in her previous set of symptoms, she *must* choose B: her super-ego, always out to maximize the torment in the situation, seeing what dazzling possibilities for self-damaging behavior are promised by the choice of B, compels her to make the choice she does, and even to conceal the real basis of the choice behind an elaborate facade of rationalizations.

A man is addicted to gambling. In the service of his addiction he loses all his money, spends what belongs to his wife, even sells his property and neglects his children. For a time perhaps he stops; then, inevitably, he takes it up again, although he himself may think he chose to. The man does not know that he is a victim rather than an agent; or, if he sometimes senses that he is in the throes of something-he-knows-not-what, he will have no inkling of its character and will soon relapse into the illusion that he (his conscious self) is freely deciding the course of his own actions. What he does not know, of course, is that he is still taking out on his mother the original lesion to his infantile narcissism, getting back at her for her fancied refusal of his infantile wishes—and this by rejecting everything identified with her, namely education, discipline, logic, common sense, training. At the roulette wheel, almost alone among adult activities, chance—the opposite of all these things—rules supreme; and his addiction represents his continued and emphatic reiteration of his rejection of Mother and all she represents to his unconscious.

This pseudo-aggression of his is of course masochistic in its effects. In the long run he always loses; he can never quit while he is winning. And far from playing in order to win, rather one can say that his losing is a *sine qua non* of his psychic equilibrium (as it was for example with Dostoyevsky): guilt demands punishment, and in the ego's "deal" with the super-ego the super-ego has granted satisfaction of infantile wishes in return for the self-damaging conditions obtaining. Winning would upset the neurotic equilibrium.<sup>5</sup>

A man has wash-compulsion. He must be constantly washing his hands—he uses up perhaps 400 towels a day. Asked why he does this, he says, "I need to, my hands are dirty"; and if it is pointed out to him that they are not really dirty, he says "They feel dirty anyway, I feel better when I wash them." So once again he washes them. He "freely decides" every

<sup>5</sup> See Edmund Bergler's article on the pathological gambler in *Diseases of the Nervous System* (1943). Also "Suppositions about the Mechanism of Criminosis," *Journal of Criminal Psychopathology* (1944) and "Clinical Contributions to the Psychogenesis of Alcohol Addiction," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 5:434 (1944).

time; he feels that he must wash them, he deliberates for a moment perhaps, but always ends by washing them. What he does not see, of course, is the invisible wires inside him pulling him inevitably to do the thing he does: the infantile id-wish concerns preoccupation with dirt, the super-ego charges him with this, and the terrified ego must respond, "No, I don't like dirt, see how clean I like to be, look how I wash my hands!"

Let us see what further "free acts" the same patient engages in (this is an actual case history): he is taken to a concentration camp, and given the worst of treatment by the Nazi guards. In the camp he no longer chooses to be clean, does not even try to be—on the contrary, his choice is now to wallow in filth as much as he can. All he is aware of now is a disinclination to be clean, and every time he must choose he chooses not to be. Behind the scenes, however, another drama is being enacted: the super-ego, perceiving that enough torment is being administered from the outside, can afford to cease pressing its charges in this quarter—the outside world is doing the torturing now, so the super-ego is relieved of the responsibility. Thus the ego is relieved of the agony of constantly making terrified replies in the form of washing to prove that the super-ego is wrong. The defense no longer being needed, the person slides back into what is his natural predilection anyway, for filth. This becomes too much even for the Nazi guards: they take hold of him one day, saying "We'll teach you how to be clean!" drag him into the snow, and pour bucket after bucket of icy water over him until he freezes to death. Such is the end-result of an original id-wish, caught in the machinations of a destroying super-ego.

Let us take, finally, a less colorful, more everyday example. A student at a university, possessing wealth, charm, and all that is usually considered essential to popularity, begins to develop the following personality-pattern: although well taught in the graces of social conversation, he always makes a *faux pas* somewhere, and always in the worst possible situation; to his friends he makes cutting remarks which hurt deeply—and always apparently aimed in such a way as to hurt the most: a remark that would not hurt A but would hurt B he invariably makes to B rather than to A, and so on. None of this is conscious. Ordinarily he is considerate of people, but he contrives always (unconsciously) to impose on just those friends who would resent it most, and at just the times when he should know that he should not impose: at 3 o'clock in the morning, without forewarning, he phones a friend in a near-by city demanding to stay at his apartment for the weekend; naturally the friend is offended, but the person himself is not aware that he has provoked the grievance ("common sense" suffers a temporary eclipse when the neurotic pattern sets in, and one's intelligence, far from being of help in such a situation, is used in the interest of the neurosis), and when the friend is cool to him the next time they meet,

he wonders why and feels unjustly treated. Aggressive behavior on his part invites resentment and aggression in turn, but all that he consciously sees is other's behavior toward him—and he considers himself the innocent victim of an unjustified "persecution."

Each of the choices is, from the moralist's point of view, free: he chose to phone his friend at 3 a.m.; he chose to make the cutting remark that he did, etc. What he does not know is that an ineradicable masochistic pattern has set in. His unconscious is far more shrewd and clever than is his conscious intellect; it sees with uncanny accuracy just what kind of behavior will damage him most, and unerringly forces him into that behavior. Consciously, the student "doesn't know why he did it"—he gives different "reasons" at different times, but they are all, once again, rationalizations cloaking the unconscious mechanism which propels him willy-nilly into actions that his "common sense" eschews.

The more of this sort of thing you see, the more you can see what the psychoanalyst means when he talks about "the illusion of free-will." And the more of a psychiatrist you become, the more you are overcome with a sense of what an illusion this precious free-will really is. In some kinds of cases most of us can see it already: it takes no psychiatrist to look at the epileptic and sigh with sadness at the thought that soon this person before you will be as one possessed, not the same thoughtful intelligent person you knew. But people are not aware of this in other contexts, for example when they express surprise at how a person whom they have been so good to could treat them so badly. Let us suppose that you help a person financially or morally or in some other way, so that he is in your debt; suppose further that he is one of the many neurotics who unconsciously identify kindness with weakness and aggression with strength, then he will unconsciously take your kindness to him as weakness and use it as the occasion for enacting some aggression against you. He can't help it, he may regret it himself later; still, he will be driven to do it. If we gain a little knowledge of psychiatry, we can look at him with pity, that a person otherwise so worthy should be so unreliable—but we will exercise realism too and be aware that there are some types of people that you cannot be good to; in "free" acts of their conscious volition, they will use your own goodness against you.

Sometimes the persons themselves will become dimly aware that "something behind the scenes" is determining their behavior. The divorcee will sometimes view herself with detachment, as if she were some machine (and indeed the psychoanalyst does call her a "repeating-machine"): "I know I'm caught in a net, that I'll fall in love with this guy and marry him and the whole ridiculous merry-go-round will start all over again."

We talk about free will, and we say, yes, the person is free to do so-and-so

if he can do so *if* he wants to—and we forget that his wanting to is itself caught up in the stream of determinism, that unconscious forces drive him into the wanting or not wanting to do the thing in question. The idea of the puppet whose motions are manipulated from behind by invisible wires, or better still, by springs inside, is no mere figure of speech. The analogy is a telling one at almost every point.

And the pity of it is that it all started so early, before we knew what was happening. The personality-structure is inelastic after the age of five, and comparatively so in most cases after the age of three. Whether one acquires a neurosis or not is determined by that age—and just as involuntarily as if it had been a curse of God. If, for example, a masochistic pattern was set up, under pressure of hyper-narcissism combined with real or fancied infantile deprivation, then the masochistic snowball was on its course downhill long before we or anybody else knew what was happening, and long before anyone could do anything about it. To speak of human beings as “puppets” in such a context is no mere metaphor, but a stark rendering of a literal fact: only the psychiatrist knows what puppets people really are; and it is no wonder that the protestations of philosophers that “the act which is the result of a volition, a deliberation, a conscious decision, is free” leave these persons, to speak mildly, somewhat cold.

But, one may object, all the states thus far described have been abnormal, neurotic ones. The well-adjusted (normal) person at least is free.

Leaving aside the question of how clearly and on what grounds one can distinguish the neurotic from the normal, let me use an illustration of a proclivity that everyone would call normal, namely, the decision of a man to support his wife and possibly a family, and consider briefly its genesis.<sup>6</sup>

Every baby comes into the world with a full-fledged case of megalomania—interested only in himself, naively assuming that he is the center of the universe and that others are present only to fulfill his wishes, and furious when his own wants are not satisfied immediately no matter for what reason. Gratitude, even for all the time and worry and care expended on him by the mother, is an emotion entirely foreign to the infant, and as he grows older it is inculcated in him only with the greatest difficulty; his natural tendency is to assume that everything that happens to him is due to himself, except for denials and frustrations, which are due to the “cruel, denying” outer world, in particular the mother; and that he owes nothing to anyone, is dependent on no one. This omnipotence-complex, or illusion of non-dependence, has been called the “autarchic fiction.” Such a conception of the world is actually fostered in the child by the conduct of adults, who automatically attempt to fulfill the infant’s every wish con-

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Bergler, *The Battle of the Conscience*, Chapter I.

cerning nourishment, sleep, and attention. The child misconceives causality and sees in these wish-fulfillments not the results of maternal kindness and love, but simply the result of his own omnipotence.

This fiction of omnipotence is gradually destroyed by experience, and its destruction is probably the deepest disappointment of the early years of life. First of all, the infant discovers that he is the victim of organic urges and necessities: hunger, defecation, urination. More important, he discovers that the maternal breast, which he has not previously distinguished from his own body (he has not needed to, since it was available when he wanted it), is not a part of himself after all, but of another creature upon whom he is dependent. He is forced to recognize this, e. g., when he wants nourishment and it is at the moment not present; even a small delay is most damaging to the "autarchic fiction." Most painful of all is the experience of weaning, probably the greatest tragedy in every baby's life, when his dependence is most cruelly emphasized; it is a frustrating experience because what he wants is no longer there at all; and if he has been able to some extent to preserve the illusion of non-dependence heretofore, he is not able to do so now—it is plain that the source of his nourishment is not dependent on him, but he on it. The shattering of the autarchic fiction is a great disillusionment to every child, a tremendous blow to his ego which he will, in one way or another, spend the rest of his life trying to repair. How does he do this?

First of all, his reaction to frustration is anger and fury; and he responds by kicking, biting, etc., the only ways he knows. But he is motorically helpless, and these measures are ineffective, and only serve to emphasize his dependence the more. Moreover, against such responses of the child the parental reaction is one of prohibition, generally accompanied by physical force of some kind. Generally the child soon learns that this form of rebellion is profitless, and brings him more harm than good. He wants to respond to frustration with violent aggression, and at the same time learns that he will be punished for such aggression, and that in any case the latter is ineffectual. What face-saving solution does he find? Since he must "face facts," since he must in any case "conform" if he is to have any peace at all, he tries to make it seem as if he himself is the source of the commands and prohibitions: the *external* prohibitive force is *internalized*—and here we have the origin of conscience. By making the prohibitive agency seem to come from within himself, the child can "save face"—as if saying, "The prohibition comes from within me, not from outside, so I'm not subservient to external rule, I'm only obeying rules I've set up myself," thus to some extent saving the autarchic fiction, and at the same time avoiding unpleasant consequences directed against himself by complying with parental commands.

Moreover, the boy<sup>7</sup> has unconsciously never forgiven the mother for his dependence on her in early life, for nourishment and all other things. It has upset his illusion of non-dependence. These feelings have been repressed and are not remembered; but they are acted out in later life in many ways—e.g., in the constant deprecation man has for woman's duties such as cooking and housework of all sorts ("All she does is stay home and get together a few meals, and she calls that work"), and especially in the man's identification with the mother in his sex experiences with women. By identifying with someone one cancels out in effect the person with whom he identifies—replacing that person, unconsciously denying his existence, and the man, identifying with his early mother, playing the active role in "giving" to his wife as his mother has "given" to him, is in effect the denial of his mother's existence, a fact which is narcissistically embarrassing to his ego because it is chiefly responsible for shattering his autarchic fiction. In supporting his wife, he can unconsciously deny that his mother gave to him, and that he was dependent on her giving. Why is it that the husband plays the provider, and wants his wife to be dependent on no one else, although twenty years before he was nothing but a parasitic baby? This is a face-saving device on his part: he can act out the reasoning "See, I'm not the parasitic baby, on the contrary I'm the provider, the giver." His playing the provider is a constant face-saving device, to deny his early dependence which is so embarrassing to his ego. It is no wonder that men generally dislike to be reminded of their babyhood, when they were dependent on woman.

Thus we have here a perfectly normal adult reaction which is unconsciously motivated. The man "chooses" to support a family—and his choice is as unconsciously motivated as anything could be. (I have described here only the "normal" state of affairs, uncomplicated by the well-nigh infinite number of variations that occur in actual practice.)

Now, what of the notion of responsibility? What happens to it on our analysis?

Let us begin with an example, not a fictitious one. A woman and her two-year-old baby are riding on a train to Montreal in mid-winter. The child is ill. The woman wants badly to get to her destination. She is, unknown to herself, the victim of a neurotic conflict whose nature is irrelevant here except for the fact that it forces her to behave aggressively toward the child, partly to spite her husband whom she despises and who loves the child, but chiefly to ward off super-ego charges of masochistic attachment. Consciously she loves the child, and when she says this she says it

<sup>7</sup> The girl's development after this point is somewhat different. Society demands more aggressiveness of the adult male, hence there are more super-ego strictures on tendencies toward passivity in the male; accordingly his defenses must be stronger.

sincerely, but she must behave aggressively toward it nevertheless, just as many children love their mothers but are nasty to them most of the time in neurotic pseudo-aggression. The child becomes more ill as the train approaches Montreal; the heating system of the train is not working, and the conductor advises the woman to get off the train at the next town and get the child to a hospital at once. The woman says no, she must get to Montreal. Shortly afterward, the child's condition worsens, and the mother does all she can to keep it alive, without, however, leaving the train, for she declares that it is absolutely necessary that she reach her destination. But before she gets there the child is dead. After that, of course, the mother grieves, blames herself, weeps hysterically, and joins the church to gain surcease from the guilt that constantly overwhelms her when she thinks of how her aggressive behavior has killed her child.

Was she responsible for her deed? In ordinary life, after making a mistake, we say, "Chalk it up to experience." Here we say, "Chalk it up to the neurosis." No, she is not responsible. She could not help it if her neurosis forced her to act this way—she didn't even know what was going on behind the scenes, she merely acted out the part assigned to her. This is far more true than is generally realized: criminal actions in general are not actions for which their agents are responsible; the agents are passive, not active—they are victims of a neurotic conflict. Their very hyper-activity is unconsciously determined.

To say this is, of course, not to say that we should not punish criminals. Clearly, for our own protection, we must remove them from our midst so that they can no longer molest and endanger organized society. And, of course, if we use the word "responsible" in such a way that justly to hold someone responsible for a deed is by definition identical with being justified in punishing him, then we can and do hold people responsible. But this is like the sense of "free" in which free acts are voluntary ones. It does not go deep enough. In a deeper sense we cannot hold the person responsible: we may hold his neurosis responsible, but he is not responsible for his neurosis, particularly since the age at which its onset was inevitable was an age before he could even speak.

The neurosis is responsible—but isn't the neurosis a part of *him*? We have been speaking all the time as if the person and his unconscious were two separate beings; but isn't he one personality, including conscious and unconscious departments together?

I do not wish to deny this. But it hardly helps us here; for what people want when they talk about freedom, and what they hold to when they champion it, is the idea that the *conscious* will is the master of their destiny. "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul"—and they surely mean their conscious selves, the self that they can recognize and search and



introspect. Between an unconscious that willy-nilly determines your actions, and an external force which pushes you, there is little if anything to choose. The unconscious is just *as if* it were an outside force; and indeed, psychiatrists will assert that the inner Hitler can torment you far more than any external Hitler can. Thus the kind of freedom that people want, the only kind they will settle for, is precisely the kind that psychiatry says that they cannot have.

Heretofore it was pretty generally thought that, while we could not rightly blame a person for the color of his eyes or the morality of his parents, or even for what he did at the age of three, or to a large extent what impulses he had and whom he fell in love with, one *could* do so for other of his adult activities, particularly the acts he performed voluntarily and with premeditation. Later this attitude was shaken. Many voluntary acts came to be recognized, at least in some circles, as compelled by the unconscious. Some philosophers recognized this too—Ayer<sup>8</sup> talks about the kleptomaniac being unfree, and about a person being unfree when another person exerts a habitual ascendancy over his personality. But this is as far as he goes. The usual examples, such as the kleptomaniac and the schizophrenic, apparently satisfy most philosophers, and with these exceptions removed, the rest of mankind is permitted to wander in the vast and alluring fields of freedom and responsibility. So far, the inroads upon freedom left the vast majority of humanity untouched; they began to hit home when psychiatrists began to realize, though philosophers did not, that the domination of the conscious by the unconscious extended, not merely to a few exceptional individuals, but to all human beings, that the “big three behind the scenes” are not respecters of persons, and dominate us all, even including that *sanctum sanctorum* of freedom, our conscious will. To be sure, the domination in the case of “normal” individuals is somewhat more benevolent than the tyranny and despotism exercised in neurotic cases, and therefore the former have evoked less comment; but the principle remains in all cases the same: the unconscious is the master of every fate and the captain of every soul.

We speak of a machine turning out good products most of the time but every once in a while it turns out a “lemon.” We do not, of course, hold the product responsible for this, but the machine, and via the machine, its maker. Is it silly to extend to inanimate objects the idea of responsibility? Of course. But is it any less silly to employ the notion in speaking of human creatures? Are not the two kinds of cases analogous in countless important ways? Occasionally a child turns out badly too, even when his environment and training are the same as that of his brothers and sisters who turn

<sup>8</sup> A. J. Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity,” *Polemic* (September-October 1946), pp. 40-43.

out "all right." He is the "bad penny." His acts of rebellion against parental discipline in adult life (such as the case of the gambler, already cited) are traceable to early experiences of real or fancied denial of infantile wishes. Sometimes the denial has been real, though many denials are absolutely necessary if the child is to grow up to observe the common decencies of civilized life; sometimes, if the child has an unusual quantity of narcissism, every event that occurs is interpreted by him as a denial of his wishes, and nothing a parent could do, even granting every humanly possible wish, would help. In any event, the later neurosis can be attributed to this. Can the person himself be held responsible? Hardly. If he engages in activities which are a menace to society, he must be put into prison, of course, but responsibility is another matter. The time when the events occurred which rendered his neurotic behavior inevitable was a time long before he was capable of thought and decision. As an adult, he is a victim of a world he never made—only this world is inside him.

What about the children who turn out "all right"? All we can say is that "it's just lucky for them" that what happened to their unfortunate brother didn't happen to them; *through no virtue of their own* they are not doomed to the life of unconscious guilt, expiation, conscious depression, terrified ego-gestures for the appeasement of a tyrannical super-ego, that he is. The machine turned them out with a minimum of damage. But if the brother cannot be blamed for his evils, neither can they be praised for their good. It will take society a long time to come round to this attitude. We do not blame people for the color of their eyes, but we have not attained the same attitude toward their socially significant activities.

We all agree that machines turn out "lemons", we all agree that nature turns out misfits in the realm of biology—the blind, the crippled, the diseased; but we hesitate to include the realm of the personality, for here, it seems, is the last retreat of our dignity as human beings. Our ego can endure anything but this; this island at least must remain above the encroaching flood. But may not precisely the same analysis be made here also? Nature turns out psychological "lemons" too, in far greater quantities than any other kind; and indeed all of us are "lemons" in some respect or other, the difference being one of degree. Some of us are lucky enough not to have a gambling-neurosis or criminotic tendencies or masochistic mother-attachment or overdimensional repetition-compulsion to make our lives miserable, but most of our actions, those usually considered the most important, are unconsciously dominated just the same. And, if a neurosis may be likened to a curse of God, let those of us, the elect, who are enabled to enjoy a measure of life's happiness without the hell-fire of neurotic guilt, take this, not as our own achievement, but simply for what it is—a gift of God.

Let us, however, quit metaphysics and put the situation schematically in the form of a deductive argument.

1. An occurrence over which we had no control is something we cannot be held responsible for.
2. Events E, occurring during our babyhood, were events over which we had no control.
3. Therefore events E were events which we cannot be held responsible for.
4. But if there is something we cannot be held responsible for, neither can we be held responsible for something that inevitably results from it.
5. Events E have as inevitable consequence Neurosis N, which in turn has as inevitable consequence Behavior B.
6. Since N is the inevitable consequence of E and B is the inevitable consequence of N, B is the inevitable consequence of E.
7. Hence, not being responsible for E, we cannot be responsible for B.

In Samuel Butler's Utopian satire *Erewhon* there occurs the following passage, in which a judge is passing sentence on a prisoner:

It is all very well for you to say that you came of unhealthy parents, and had a severe accident in your childhood which permanently undermined your constitution; excuses such as these are the ordinary refuge of the criminal; but they cannot for one moment be listened to by the ear of justice. I am not here to enter upon curious metaphysical questions as to the origin of this or that—questions to which there would be no end were their introduction once tolerated, and which would result in throwing the only guilt on the tissues of the primordial cell, or on the elementary gases. There is no question of how you came to be wicked, but only this—namely, are you wicked or not? This has been decided in the affirmative, neither can I hesitate for a single moment to say that it has been decided justly. You are a bad and dangerous person, and stand branded in the eyes of your fellow countrymen with one of the most heinous known offenses.<sup>9</sup>

As moralists read this passage, they may perhaps nod with approval. But the joke is on them. The sting comes when we realize what the crime is for which the prisoner is being sentenced: namely, consumption. The defendant is reminded that during the previous year he was sentenced for aggravated bronchitis, and is warned that he should profit from experience in the future. Butler is employing here his familiar method of presenting some human tendency (in this case, holding people responsible for what isn't their fault) to a ridiculous extreme and thereby reducing it to absurd-

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (Modern Library edition), p. 107.

ity. How soon will mankind appreciate the keen edge of Butler's bitter irony? How long will they continue to read such a passage, but fail to smile, or yet to wince? . . .

We must remember that every term that can be significantly used must have a significant opposite. If the opposite cannot significantly be asserted, neither can its original. If the term "unfree" can be significantly used, so can the term "free." Even though there may be no actual denotation of a term naming an opposite, one must know what it would be like—what it would mean to speak of it; even though there are no white crows, it must be significant, as indeed it is, to speak of them. Now is the case of freedom like that of the white crows that don't exist but can be significantly spoken of, or like the black crows that do exist and can be significantly spoken of as well?

Unless "freedom" is taken to mean the same as "lack of cause" and a principle of universal causality is taken for granted, I think the latter must be the case.

If we asked the psychoanalysts for their opinion on this, they would doubtless reply somewhat as follows. They would say that they were not accustomed to using the term "free" at all, but that if they had to suggest a criterion for distinguishing the free from the unfree, they would say that a person's freedom occurs in inverse proportion to his neuroticism; the more he is compelled in his behavior by a *malevolent* unconscious, the less free he is. We speak of degrees of freedom—and the psychologically normal and well-adjusted individual is comparatively the freest, even though most of his behavior is determined by his unconscious.

But suppose it is the determination of his behavior by his unconscious, no matter what kind, that we balk at? We may then say that a man is free only to the extent that his behavior is *not* unconsciously motivated at all. If this be our criterion, most of our behavior could not be called free: everything, including both impulses and volitions, having to do with our basic attitudes toward life, the general tenor of our tastes, whether we become philosophers or artists or business men, our whole affective life including our preferences for blondes or brunettes, active or passive, older or younger, has its inevitable basis in the unconscious. Only those comparatively vanilla-flavored aspects of life—such as our behavior toward people who don't really matter to us—are exempted from this rule.

These, I think, are the two principal criteria for distinguishing freedom from the lack of it which we might set up on the basis of psychoanalytic knowledge. Conceivably we might set up others. In every case, of course, it remains trivially true that "it all depends on how we choose to use the word." The facts are what they are, regardless of how we choose to label

them. But if we choose to label facts in a way which is out of accordance with people's deep-seated and traditional methods of labeling them, as we would be doing if we labeled "free" human actions which we know as much about as we now do through modern psychiatry, then we shall only be manipulating words to mislead our fellow creatures.

## Self-Regulation\*

AUTOMATIC CONTROL is not a new thing in the world. Self-regulative mechanisms are an inherent feature of innumerable processes in nature, living and nonliving. Men have long recognized the existence of such mechanisms in living forms, although, to be sure, they have often mistaken automatic regulation for the operation of some conscious design or vital force. Even the deliberate construction of self-regulating machines is no innovation: the history of such devices goes back at least several hundred years.

Nevertheless, the preacher's weary cry that there is nothing new under the sun is at best a fragment of the truth. The general notion of automatic control may be ancient, but the formulation of its principles is a very recent achievement. And the systematic exploitation of these principles—their subtle theoretical elaboration and far-reaching practical application—must be credited to the twentieth century. When human intelligence is disciplined by the analytical methods of modern science, and fortified by modern material resources and techniques, it can transform almost beyond recognition the most familiar aspects of the physical and social scene. There is surely a profound difference between a primitive recognition that some mechanisms are self-regulative while others are not, and the invention of analytic theory which not only accounts for the gross facts but guides the construction of new types of systems.

We now possess at least a first approximation to an adequate theory of automatic control, and we are at a point of history when the practical application of that theory begins to be conspicuous and widely felt. The future of automatic control, and the significance for human weal or woe of its extension to fresh areas of modern life, are still obscure. But if the future is not to take us completely by surprise, we need to survey the

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\* From *Scientific American* (1955). By permission.

principal content of automatic control theory, the problems that still face it and the role that automatic control is likely to play in our society.

The central ideas of the theory of self-regulative systems are simple. Every operating system, from a pump to a primate, exhibits a characteristic pattern of behavior, and requires a supply of energy and a favorable environment for its continued operation. A system will cease to function when variations in its intake of energy or changes in its external and internal environment become too large. What distinguishes an automatically controlled system is that it possesses working components which maintain at least some of its typical processes despite such excessive variations. As need arises, these components employ a small part of the energy supplied to the system to augment or diminish the total volume of that energy, or in other ways to compensate for environmental changes. Even these elementary notions provide fruitful clues for understanding not only inanimate automatically controlled systems, but also organic bodies and their interrelations. There is no longer any sector of nature in which the occurrence of self-regulating systems can be regarded as a theme for oracular mystery-mongering.

However, some systems permit a greater degree of automatic control than others. A system's susceptibility to control depends on the complexity of its behavior pattern and on the range of variations under which it can maintain that pattern. Moreover, responses of automatic controls to changes affecting the operation of a system are in practice rarely instantaneous, and never absolutely accurate. An adequate science of automatic control must therefore develop comprehensive ways of discriminating and measuring variations in quality; it must learn how signals (or information) may be transmitted and relayed; it must be familiar with the conditions under which self-excitation and oscillations may occur, and it must devise mechanisms which will anticipate the probable course and sequence of events. Such a science will use and develop current theories of fundamental physico-chemical processes. It is dependent upon the elaborate logico-mathematical analyses of statistical aggregates, and upon an integration of specialized researches which until recently have seemed only remotely related. Our present theory of self-regulative systems has sprung from the soil of contemporary theoretical science. Its future is contingent upon the continued advance of basic research—in mathematics, physics, chemistry, physiology and the sciences of human behavior.

Automatic controls have been introduced into modern industry only in part because of the desire to offset rising labor costs. They are in fact not primarily an economy measure but a necessity, dictated by the nature of modern services and manufactured products and by the large demand for goods of uniformly high quality. Many articles in current use must be

processed under conditions of speed, temperature, pressure and chemical exchange which make human control impossible, or at least impracticable on an extensive scale. Moreover, modern machines and instruments themselves must often satisfy unprecedentedly high standards of quality, and beyond certain limits the discrimination and control of qualitative differences elude human capacity. The automatic control of both the manufacturing process and the quality of the product manufactured is therefore frequently indispensable.

Once the pleasures of creating and contemplating the quasi-organic unity of self-regulative systems have been learned, it is only a short step to the extension of such controls to areas where they are not mandatory. Economic considerations undoubtedly play a role in this extension, but certain engineers are probably at least partly correct in their large claim that the modern development in automatic engineering is the consequence of a point of view which finds satisfaction in unified schemes for their own sake.

How likely is the total automatization of industry, and what are the broad implications for human welfare of present tendencies in that direction? Crystal-gazing is a natural and valuable pastime, even if the visions beheld are only infrequently accurate. Some things, at any rate, are seen more clearly and certainly than others. If it is safe to project recent trends into the future, and if fundamental research in relevant areas continues to prosper, there is every reason to believe that the self-regulation of industrial production, and even of industrial management, will steadily increase. On the other hand, in some areas automatization will never be complete—either because of the relatively high cost of conversion, or because we shall never be able to dispense with human ingenuity in coping with unforeseeable changes, or finally because of certain inherent limitations in the capacity of any machine which operates according to a closed system of rules. The dream of a productive system that entirely runs itself appears to be unrealizable.

Some consequences of large-scale automatic control in current technology are already evident. . . . In the main these developments contribute to human welfare.

However, commentators on automatic control also see it as a potential source of social evil, and express fears—not altogether illegitimate—concerning its ultimate effect. There is first the fear that continued expansion in this direction will be accompanied by large-scale technological unemployment, and in consequence by acute economic distress and social upheaval. The possibility of disastrous technological unemployment cannot be ruled out on purely theoretical grounds; special circumstances will determine whether or not it occurs. But the brief history of automatic



control in the U. S. suggests that serious unemployment is not its inevitable concomitant, at least in this country. The U. S. appears to be capable of adjusting itself to a major industrial reorganization without uprooting its basic patterns of living. Large-scale technological unemployment may be a more acute danger in other countries, but the problem is not insurmountable, and measures to circumvent or to mitigate it can be taken.

There is next the fear that an automatic technology will impoverish the quality of human life, robbing it of opportunities for individual creation, for pride of workmanship and for sensitive qualitative discrimination. This fear is often associated with a condemnation of "materialism" and with a demand for a return to the "spiritual" values of earlier civilizations. All the available evidence shows, however, that great cultural achievements are attained only by societies in which at least part of the population possesses considerable worldly substance. There is a good empirical basis for the belief that automatic control, by increasing the material well-being of a greater fraction of mankind, will release fresh energies for the cultivation and flowering of human excellence. At any rate, though material abundance undoubtedly is not a sufficient condition for the appearance of great works of the human spirit, neither is material penury; the vices of poverty are surely more ignoble than those of wealth. Moreover, there is no reason why liberation from the unimaginative drudgery which has been the lot of so many men throughout the ages should curtail opportunities for creative thought and for satisfaction in work well done. For example, the history of science exhibits a steady tendency to eliminate intellectual effort in the solution of individualized problems, by developing comprehensive formulas which can resolve by rote a whole class of them. To paraphrase Alfred North Whitehead, acts of thought, like a cavalry charge in battle, should be introduced only at the critical junction of affairs.

There has been no diminution in opportunities for creative scientific activity, for there are more things still to be discovered than are dreamt of in many a discouraged philosophy. And there is no ground for supposing that the course of events will be essentially different in other areas of human activity. Why should the wide adoption of automatic control and its associated quantitative methods induce a general insensitivity to qualitative distinctions? It is precisely measurement that makes evident the distinctions between qualities, and it is by measurement that man has frequently refined his discriminations and gained for them a wider acceptance. The apprehension that the growth of automatic controls will deprive us of all that gives zest and value to our lives appears in the main to be baseless.

There is finally the fear that an automatic technology will encourage

the concentration of political power; that authoritarian controls will be established for all social institutions—in the interest of the smooth operation of industry and of society but to the ruin of democratic freedom. This forecast is given some substance by the recent history of several nations, but the dictatorships differ so greatly from the Western democracies in political traditions and social stratifications that the prediction has dubious validity for us. Nevertheless, one element in this grim conjecture requires attention. Whatever the future of automatic control, governmental regulation of social institutions is certain to increase—population growth alone will make further regulation imperative. It does not necessarily follow that liberal civilizations must therefore disappear. To argue that it does is to commit a form of the pathetic fallacy. Aristotle argued that political democracy was possible only in small societies such as the Greek city-states. If our present complex governmental regulations in such matters as sanitation, housing, transportation and education could have been foreseen by our ancestors, many of them would doubtless have concluded that such regulations are incompatible with any sense of personal freedom. It is easy to confound what is merely peculiar to a given society with the indispensable conditions for democratic life.

The crucial question is not whether control of social transactions will be further centralized. The crucial question is whether, despite such a movement, freedom of inquiry, freedom of communication and freedom to participate actively in decisions affecting our lives will be preserved and enlarged. It is good to be jealous of these rights; they are the substance of a liberal society. The probable expansion of automatic technology does raise serious problems concerning them. But it also provides fresh opportunities for the exercise of creative ingenuity and extraordinary wisdom in dealing with human affairs.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

# The Science to Save Us from Science\*

SINCE THE beginning of the seventeenth century scientific discovery and invention have advanced at a continually increasing rate. This fact has made the last three hundred and fifty years profoundly different from all previous ages. The gulf separating man from his past has widened from generation to generation, and finally from decade to decade. A reflective person, meditating on the extinction of trilobites, dinosaurs and mammoths, is driven to ask himself some very disquieting questions. Can our species endure so rapid a change? Can the habits which insured survival in a comparatively stable past still suffice amid the kaleidoscopic scenery of our time? And, if not, will it be possible to change ancient patterns of behavior as quickly as the inventors change our material environment? No one knows the answer, but it is possible to survey probabilities, and to form some hypotheses as to the alternative directions that human development may take.

The first question is: Will scientific advance continue to grow more and more rapid, or will it reach a maximum speed and then begin to slow down?

The discovery of scientific method required genius, but its utilization requires only talent. An intelligent young scientist, if he gets a job giving access to a good laboratory, can be pretty certain of finding out something of interest, and may stumble upon some new fact of immense importance. Science, which was still a rebellious force in the early seventeenth century, is now integrated with the life of the community by the support of governments and universities. And as its importance becomes more evident, the

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number of people employed in scientific research continually increases. It would seem to follow that, so long as social and economic conditions do not become adverse, we may expect the rate of scientific advance to be maintained, and even increased, until some new limiting factor intervenes.

It might be suggested that, in time, the amount of knowledge needed before a new discovery could be made would become so great as to absorb all the best years of a scientist's life, so that by the time he reached the frontier of knowledge he would be senile. I suppose this may happen some day, but that day is certainly very distant. In the first place, methods of teaching improve. Plato thought that students in his academy would have to spend ten years learning what was then known of mathematics; nowadays any mathematically minded schoolboy learns much more mathematics in a year.

In the second place, with increasing specialization, it is possible to reach the frontier of knowledge along a narrow path, involving much less labor than a broad highway. In the third place, the frontier is not a circle but an irregular contour, in some places not far from the center. Mendel's epoch-making discovery required little previous knowledge; what it needed was a life of elegant leisure spent in a garden. Radio-activity was discovered by the fact that some specimens of pitchblende were unexpectedly found to have photographed themselves in the dark. I do not think, therefore, that purely intellectual reasons will slow up scientific advances for a very long time to come.

There is another reason for expecting scientific advance to continue, and that is that it increasingly attracts the best brains. Leonardo da Vinci was equally pre-eminent in art and science, but it was from art that he derived his greatest fame. A man of similar endowments living at the present day would almost certainly hold some post which would require his giving all his time to science; if his politics were orthodox, he would probably be engaged in devising the hydrogen bomb, which our age would consider more useful than his pictures. The artist, alas, has not the status that he once had. Renaissance princes might compete for Michelangelo; modern states compete for nuclear physicists.

There are considerations of quite a different sort which might lead to an expectation of scientific retrogression. It may be held that science itself generates explosive forces which will, sooner or later, make it impossible to preserve the kind of society in which science can flourish. This is a large and different question, to which no confident answer can be given. It is a very important question, which deserves to be examined. Let us therefore see what is to be said about it.

Industrialism, which is in the main a product of science, has provided a certain way of life and a certain outlook on the world. In America and

Britain, the oldest industrial countries, this outlook and this way of life have come gradually, and the population has been able to adjust itself to them without any violent breach of continuity. These countries, accordingly, did not develop dangerous psychological stresses. Those who preferred the old ways could remain on the land, while the more adventurous could migrate to the new centers of industry. There they found pioneers who were compatriots, who shared in the main the general outlook of their neighbors. The only protests came from men like Carlyle and Ruskin, whom everybody at once praised and disregarded.

It was a very different matter when industrialism and science, as well-developed systems, burst violently upon countries hitherto ignorant of both, especially since they came as something foreign, demanding imitation of enemies and disruption of ancient national habits. In varying degrees this shock has been endured by Germany, Russia, Japan, India and the natives of Africa. Everywhere it has caused and is causing upheavals of one sort or another, of which as yet no one can foresee the end.

The earliest important result of the impact of industrialism on Germans was the Communist Manifesto. We think of this now as the Bible of one of the two powerful groups into which the world is divided, but it is worth while to think back to its origin in 1848. It then shows itself as an expression of admiring horror by two young university students from a pleasant and peaceful cathedral city, brought roughly and without intellectual preparation into the hurly-burly of Manchester competition.

Germany, before Bismarck had "educated" it, was a deeply religious country, with a quiet, exceptional sense of public duty. Competition, which the British regarded as essential to efficiency, and which Darwin elevated to an almost cosmic dignity, shocked the Germans, to whom service to the state seemed the obviously right moral ideal. It was therefore natural that they should fit industrialism into a framework of nationalism or socialism. The Nazis combined both. The somewhat insane and frantic character of German industrialism and the policies it inspired is due to its foreign origin and its sudden advent.

Marx's doctrine was suited to countries where industrialism was new. The German Social Democrats abandoned his dogmas when their country became industrially adult. But by that time Russia was where Germany had been in 1848, and it was natural that Marxism should find a new home. Stalin, with great skill, has combined the new revolutionary creed with the traditional belief in "Holy Russia" and the "Little Father." This is as yet the most notable example of the arrival of science in an environment that is not ripe for it. China bids fair to follow suit.

Japan, like Germany, combined modern technique with worship of the state. Educated Japanese abandoned as much of their ancient way of

life as was necessary in order to secure industrial and military efficiency. Sudden change produced collective hysteria, leading to insane visions of world power unrestrained by traditional pieties.

These various forms of madness—communism, nazism, Japanese imperialism—are the natural result of the impact of science on nations with a strong pre-scientific culture. The effects in Asia are still at an early stage. The effects upon the native races of Africa have hardly begun. It is therefore unlikely that the world will recover sanity in the near future.

The future of science—nay more, the future of mankind—depends upon whether it will be possible to restrain these various collective hysterias until the populations concerned have had time to adjust themselves to the new scientific environment. If such adjustment proves impossible, civilized society will disappear, and science will be only a dim memory. In the Dark Ages science was not distinguished from sorcery, and it is not impossible that a new Dark Ages may revive this point of view.

The danger is not remote; it threatens within the next few years. But I am not now concerned with such immediate issues. I am concerned with the wider question: Can a society based, as ours is, on science and scientific technique, have the sort of stability that many societies had in the past, or is it bound to develop explosive forces that will destroy it? This question takes us beyond the sphere of science into that of ethics and moral codes and the imaginative understanding of mass psychology. This last is a matter which political theorists have quite unduly neglected.

Let us begin with moral codes. I will illustrate the problem by a somewhat trivial illustration. There are those who think it wicked to smoke tobacco, but they are mostly people untouched by science. Those whose outlook has been strongly influenced by science usually take the view that smoking is neither a vice nor a virtue. But when I visited a Nobel works, where rivers of nitro-glycerine flowed like water, I had to leave all matches at the entrance, and it was obvious that to smoke inside the works would be an act of appalling wickedness.

This instance illustrates two points: first, that a scientific outlook tends to make some parts of traditional moral codes appear superstitious and irrational; second, that by creating a new environment science creates new duties, which may happen to coincide with those that have been discarded. A world containing hydrogen bombs is like one containing rivers of nitro-glycerine; actions elsewhere harmless may become dangerous in the highest degree. We need therefore, in a scientific world, a somewhat different moral code from the one inherited from the past. But to give to a new moral code sufficient compulsive force to restrain actions formerly considered harmless is not easy, and cannot possibly be achieved in a day.

As regards ethics, what is important is to realize the new dangers and to

consider what ethical outlook will do most to diminish them. The most important new facts are that the world is more unified than it used to be, and that communities at war with each other have more power of inflicting mutual disaster than at any former time. The question of power has a new importance. Science has enormously increased human power, but has not increased it without limit. The increase of power brings an increase of responsibility; it brings also a danger of arrogant self-assertion, which can only be averted by continuing to remember that man is not omnipotent.

The most influential sciences, hitherto, have been physics and chemistry; biology is just beginning to rival them. But before very long psychology and especially mass psychology, will be recognized as the most important of all sciences from the standpoint of human welfare. It is obvious that populations have dominant moods, which change from time to time according to their circumstances. Each mood has a corresponding ethic. Nelson inculcated these ethical principles on midshipmen: to tell the truth, to shoot straight, and to hate a Frenchman as you would the devil. This last was chiefly because the English were angry with France for intervening on the side of America. Shakespeare's Henry V says:

If it be a sin to covet honor,  
I am the most offending soul alive.

This is the ethical sentiment that goes with aggressive imperialism: "honor" is proportional to the number of harmless people you slaughter. A great many sins may be excused under the name of "patriotism." On the other hand complete powerlessness suggests humility and submission as the greatest virtues; hence the vogue of stoicism in the Roman Empire and of Methodism among the English poor in the early nineteenth century. When, however, there is a chance of successful revolt, fierce vindictive justice suddenly becomes the dominant ethical principle.

In the past, the only recognized way of inculcating moral precepts has been by preaching. But this method has very definite limitations: it is notorious that, on the average, sons of clergy are not morally superior to other people. When science has mastered this field, quite different methods will be adopted. It will be known what circumstances generate what moods, and what moods incline men to what ethical systems. Governments will then decide what sort of morality their subjects are to have and their subjects will adopt what the Government favors, but will do so under the impression that they are exercising free will. This may sound unduly cynical, but that is only because we are not yet accustomed to applying science to the human mind. Science has powers for evil, not only physically, but mentally: the hydrogen bomb can kill the body, and government propaganda (as in Russia) can kill the mind.

In view of the terrifying power that science is conferring on governments, it is necessary that those who control governments should have enlightened and intelligent ideals, since otherwise they can lead mankind to disaster.

I call an ideal "intelligent" when it is possible to approximate to it by pursuing it. This is by no means sufficient as an ethical criterion, but it is a test by which many aims can be condemned. It cannot be supposed that Hitler desired the fate which he brought upon his country and himself, and yet it was pretty certain that this would be the result of his arrogance. Therefore the ideal of "Deutschland ueber Alles" can be condemned as unintelligent. (I do not mean to suggest that this is its only defect.) Spain, France, Germany and Russia have successively sought world dominion: three of them have endured defeat in consequence, but their fate has not inspired wisdom.

Whether science—and indeed civilization in general—can long survive depends upon psychology, that is to say, it depends upon what human beings desire. The human beings concerned are rulers in totalitarian countries, and the mass of men and women in democracies. Political passions determine political conduct much more directly than is often supposed. If men desire victory more than cooperation, they will think victory possible.

But if hatred so dominates them that they are more anxious to see their enemies killed than to keep their own children alive, they will discover all kinds of "noble" reasons in favor of war. If they resent inferiority or wish to preserve superiority, they will have the sentiments that promote the class war. If they are bored beyond a point, they will welcome excitement even of a painful kind.

Such sentiments, when widespread, determine the policies and decisions of nations. Science can, if rulers so desire, create sentiments which will avert disaster and facilitate cooperation. At present there are powerful rulers who have no such wish. But the possibility exists, and science can be just as potent for good as for evil. It is not science, however, which will determine how science is used.

Science, by itself, cannot supply us with an ethic. It can show us how to achieve a given end, and it may show us that some ends cannot be achieved. But among ends that can be achieved our choice must be decided by other than purely scientific considerations. If a man were to say, "I hate the human race, and I think it would be a good thing if it were exterminated," we could say, "Well, my dear sir, let us begin the process with you." But this is hardly argument, and no amount of science could prove such a man mistaken.

But all who are not lunatics are agreed about certain things: That it is



better to be alive than dead, better to be adequately fed than starved, better to be free than a slave. Many people desire those things only for themselves and their friends; they are quite content that their enemies should suffer. These people can be refuted by science: Mankind has become so much one family that we cannot insure our own prosperity except by insuring that of everyone else. If you wish to be happy yourself, you must resign yourself to seeing others also happy.

Whether science can continue, and whether, while it continues, it can do more good than harm, depends upon the capacity of mankind to learn this simple lesson. Perhaps it is necessary that all should learn it, but it must be learned by all who have great power, and among those some still have a long way to go.

RICHARD RUDNER

## Value Judgments in Scientific Validation\*

AN IMPORTANT underlying point . . . is the manner in which, if at all, value judgments impinge on the process of validating scientific hypotheses and theories.

I think that such validations do *essentially* involve the making of value judgments in a typically ethical issue. And I emphasize *essentially* to indicate my feeling that not only do scientists, as a matter of psychological fact, make value judgments in the course of such validations—since as human beings they are so constituted as to make this virtually unavoidable—but also that the making of such judgments is *logically* involved in the validation of scientific hypotheses and consequently that a logical reconstruction of this process would entail the statement that a value judgment is a requisite step in the process.

My reasons for believing this may be set forth briefly, but before presenting them I should like to distinguish my thesis as clearly as I can from apparently similar ones that have traditionally been offered.

Traditionally the involvement of value judgments (in some typically ethical sense) in science has ordinarily been argued on three grounds: (i) Our having a science at all, or, at any rate, our voluntary engagement in such activities, presupposes a value judgment. (ii) To be able to select among alternative problems, or, at any rate, among alternative foci of his interests, the scientist must make a value judgment. (iii) The scientist cannot escape his quite human self. He is a mass of predilections, and these predilections must inevitably influence all his activities—not excepting his scientific ones. These traditional arguments have never seemed entirely

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adequate, and the responses that some empirically oriented philosophers and some scientists have made to them have been telling. These responses have generally had the following import.

If it is necessary to make a value decision to have a science before we can have one, then this decision is literally prescientific and has not, therefore, been shown to be any part of the *procedures* of science. Similarly, the decision that one problem is more worth while as a focus of attention than another is an extraproblematic decision and forms no part of the procedures involved in dealing with the problem *decided* upon. Since it is these procedures that constitute the method of science, the value judgment has not thus been shown to be involved with the scientific method as such.

With respect to the presence of our predilections in the laboratory, most empirically oriented scientists and philosophers agree that this is "unfortunately" the case; but, they hasten to add, if science is to progress toward objectivity, the influence of our personal feelings or biases on experimental results must be minimized. We must try not to let our personal idiosyncrasies affect our scientific work. The perfect scientist—the scientist *qua* scientist—does not allow this kind of value judgment to influence his work. However much he may find doing so unavoidable, *qua* father, *qua* lover, *qua* member of society, *qua* grouch, *when* he does so he is not behaving *qua* scientist. Consequently, a logical reconstruction of the scientific method would not need, on this account, to include a reference to the making of value judgments. From such considerations it would seem that the traditional arguments for the involvement of value judgments in science lack decisiveness.

But I think a different and somewhat stronger argument can be made. I assume that no analysis of what constitutes the method of science would be satisfactory unless it comprised some assertion to the effect that the scientist validates—that is, accepts or rejects—hypotheses. But if this is so, then clearly the scientist does make value judgments. Since no scientific hypothesis is ever completely verified, in accepting a hypothesis on the basis of evidence, the scientist must make the decision that the evidence is *sufficiently* strong or that the probability is *sufficiently* high to warrant the acceptance of the hypothesis. Obviously, our decision with regard to the evidence and how strong is "strong enough" is going to be a function of the *importance*, in the typically ethical sense, of making a mistake in accepting or rejecting the hypothesis. Thus, to take a crude but easily manageable example, if the hypothesis under consideration stated that a toxic ingredient of a drug was not present in lethal quantity, then we would require a relatively high degree of confirmation or confidence before accepting the hypothesis—for the consequences of making a mistake here are exceedingly grave by our moral standards. In contrast, if our hypoth-

esis stated that, on the basis of some sample, a certain lot of machine-stamped belt buckles was not defective, the degree of confidence we would require would be relatively lower. *How sure we must be before we accept a hypothesis depends on how serious a mistake would be.*

The examples I have chosen are from scientific inferences in industrial quality control. But the point is clearly quite general in application. It would be interesting and instructive, for example, to know how high a degree of probability the Manhattan Project scientists demanded for the hypothesis that no uncontrollable pervasive chain reaction would occur before they proceeded with the first atomic bomb detonation or even first activated the Chicago pile above a critical level. It would be equally interesting and instructive to know how they decided that the chosen probability value (if one was chosen) was high enough rather than one that was higher; on the other hand, it is conceivable that the problem, in this form, was not brought to consciousness at all.

In general, then, before we can accept any hypothesis, the value decision must be made in the light of the seriousness of a mistake, and the degree of probability must be *high enough* or the evidence must be *strong enough* to warrant its acceptance.

Some empiricists, confronted with the foregoing considerations, agree that *acceptance* or *rejection* of hypotheses essentially involves value judgments, but they are nonetheless loath to accept the conclusion; instead they have denied the premise that it is the business of the scientist *qua* scientist to validate hypotheses or theories. They have argued that the scientist's task is *only to determine the strength of the evidence* for a hypothesis and not, as scientist, to accept or reject the hypothesis.

But a little reflection shows that the plausibility of this as an objection is merely apparent. The determination that the degree of confirmation is, say,  $p$  or that the strength of the evidence is such and such, which is on this view the indispensable task of the scientist *qua* scientist, is clearly nothing more than *the acceptance, by the scientist, of the hypothesis that the degree of confidence is  $p$  or that the strength of the evidence is such and such*; and, as these men have conceded, acceptance of hypotheses does require value decisions.

If the major point I have tried to establish is correct, then we are confronted with a first-order crisis in science and methodology. The positive horror with which most scientists and philosophers of science view the intrusion of value considerations into science is wholly understandable. Memories of the conflict, now abated but to a certain extent still continuing, between science and, for example, the dominant religions over the intrusion of religious value considerations into the domain of scientific inquiry are strong in many reflective scientists. The traditional

search for objectivity exemplifies science's pursuit of one of its most precious ideals. For the scientist to close his eyes to the fact that scientific method *intrinsically* requires the making of value decisions, and for him to push out of his consciousness the fact that he does make them, can in no way bring him closer to the ideal of objectivity. To refuse to pay attention to the value decisions that *must* be made, to make them intuitively, unconsciously, and haphazardly, is to leave an essential aspect of scientific method scientifically out of control.

What seems necessary (and no more than the sketchiest indications of the problem can be given here) is nothing less than a radical reworking of the ideal of scientific objectivity. The naive conception of the scientist as one who is cold-blooded, emotionless, impersonal, and passive, mirroring the world perfectly in the highly polished lenses of his steel-rimmed glasses is no longer, if it ever was, adequate.

What is proposed here is that objectivity for science lies at least in becoming precise about what value judgments are being made and might have been made in a given inquiry—and, stated in the most challenging form, what value decisions ought to be made.



# *The Naturalistic Temper*

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHERS share the view that the spatiotemporal world of "nature" is the whole of what exists. Man is regarded as a part of nature distinguished only by his ability to transform his environment by means of responsible action growing out of responsible inquiry.

Certain negative as well as affirmative consequences follow from this view.

*Negative:* While not discounting or denying all the values of religious life and practice, Naturalistic thinkers are agreed in rejecting any belief in God conceived as a supernatural being. In the areas of ethics and politics, Naturalists deny the existence of any moral laws regarded as absolute, and not derived from human experience.

*Affirmative:* The Naturalists share the view that the methods of modern science are the only reliable means of attaining knowledge. What makes their view philosophical rather than purely scientific is that they will attempt to relate the application of scientific method to normative as well as to strictly factual problems.

Beyond these generalizations, Naturalism represents a collection of quite disparate views, especially regarding the status of such value concepts as "good," "right," and "ought." Although, that is, Naturalists agree that science and facts are relevant to the explication and settlement of normative questions, just *how* they are related is very much in dispute.

For a display of the Naturalistic temper in action, study the selections.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- EDDINGTON, SIR ARTHUR S. *The Nature of the Physical World*  
HAECKEL, ERNST. *The Riddle of the Universe*  
HARTSHORNE, CHARLES. *Beyond Humanism*  
HOCKING, WILLIAM E. *Science and the Idea of God*  
HUXLEY, THOMAS H. *Lay Sermons*  
KRIKORIAN, YERVANT H., ed. *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*  
OPPENHEIMER, J. R. *Science and the Common Understanding*  
RUSSELL, BERTRAND. *What I Believe*  
RUSSELL, BERTRAND. *A Free Man's Worship*  
SANTAYANA, GEORGE. *Skepticism and Animal Faith*  
WARD, JAMES. *Naturalism and Agnosticism*



M. C. OTTO

## The Existence of God\*

... PERIODICALLY, BELIEF in gods or God has had to reconstruct its object to keep it in sufficient accord with the changing status of culture. It is of course possible to make light of this continuous redefinition. God, in his full reality, it may be argued, is humanly incomprehensible. As knowledge increases we are able to get a better idea of God, and the succession of new definitions is evidence that this has been done. The reality, God, has remained unchanged. It is our concepts of him that have changed. They have come nearer and nearer the truth.

Before we admit that this argument is conclusive let us observe the difference in the effect of redefinition on a comparable idea. Naturalism has changed as theism has. Mr. Whitehead's God differs no more profoundly from the Homeric gods or the Hebrew Lord of Hosts, than Mr. Einstein's universe differs from that of Democritus or Newton. The fact of importance, however, is not the change itself, but the trend of the change in relation to daily practice. Redefinitions of naturalism have been paralleled by the extension of naturalistic explanations to an ever widening field of practical activity, and by a correspondingly extended reliance upon naturalistic method. Redefinitions of theism, on the contrary, have involved the exclusion of theistic explanation from one sphere after another, and a growing disinclination to employ theistic method anywhere. *Naturalism has gained and theism has lost in power over men's lives.* In the one case redefinition has registered advance; in the other case retreat.

This difference is the fact of importance, and I do not see how it can be denied. Nothing is more obvious or amazing than the steady weakening of living faith in God, I mean in a God of any kind. Early man believed the

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gods to be real in the same sense that he believed the mountains, forests, or waterfalls to be real which were their dwelling places. For a long time spirits lived in drugs and wines and made them potent. They were believed to be of the same order of fact as the potency itself. But man is curious and curiosity is relentless. Hence the discovery was made that a reported god may be a myth. It became known that this or that god might be disregarded. Once initiated, skepticism regarding theistic explanations could not be halted. In the end it destroyed the theism of the ancient world.

Nor could it be stopped by the change later on from polytheism to monotheism, or in modern times by refinements in monotheisms. And we must remind ourselves that this had wide practical repercussions. Dependence upon human effort more and more replaced dependence upon God. One domain after another was taken from God's empire and brought under human supervision. Today his prerogatives are acknowledged in a very limited region of life.

Some years ago Nancy Barr Mavity made a critical observation which seemed to me then and seems to me still pertinent. "The one thing needful," she wrote, "is not that we should find blanket terms under which we seem to agree, but that we should drag out our disagreement into the clearest possible light, and so find out what we are talking about. Not only our language, but our intelligence, suffers from preferring vague unity to distinct differentiation." Her criticism applies with special force to the present theme. If there is a word that has spread a wider blanket over disagreement than the word God, it has not come to my attention.

The explanation is simple. Redefinitions have not been due to new intuitions or insights. They have been, with rare exceptions, the work of intellectuals who were busy adjusting a traditional concept to the demands of accumulated learning. The task that absorbed them was to stretch the blanket term God over newly discovered intellectual discrepancies. The result has been the piling up of redefinitions, one upon another, until the life of the word has been all but smothered out of it. What we have left of God in the most pretentious definitions now current is little if anything more than the original word. The vital meaning of God in human experience has been refined away.

Man thus seems to have gone far in the direction of *not* believing in God. If this is really a fact, what good can come from ignoring it, and consequently failing to make provision for the serious hazards it has brought? Personally, I can think of no question more in the human interest to ask than this: What has been the effect of turning away from hoped-for divine aid, and relying instead upon human initiative and effort?

Well, what is the answer? That in proportion as men have ceased to lean on God, they have not only learned to bend mechanical forces to

good use and to control the physical conditions of human well-being, but they have opened up undreamed-of resources for the satisfaction of the noblest desires of which they are capable. In the securing of food, clothing and shelter it has proved to be better to proceed as if the existence of God were irrelevant. The advance of medical science in safeguarding life, caring for bodily and mental health, and putting up a winning fight against diseases that had decimated mankind for centuries, is perhaps the most conspicuous example. It is not theism to which we must ascribe the development of medicine. Medical progress has had to fight against theistic prejudice. It was likewise theistic prejudice that stood in the way of a hopeful treatment of psychic disorders, of sex and population problems, of antisocial propensities, and similar difficulties.

Whenever men and women have been able to act as if there were no divinity to shape human ends, and have themselves assumed responsibility, they have discovered how to turn their abilities to good account. Is it likely that this process will be reversed in the future? I am convinced that we are nearer the beginning than the end of it, as helpless to change this general direction as we are to prevent ourselves from getting older. What we *can* do is to try to go forward intelligently, as in growing older we may try to grow wiser.

## iv

Not believing in God has worked well. It has worked better than believing did. It is responsible for a realistic acquaintance with our world and a better understanding of human nature. This would seem to furnish evidence, of a kind usually considered good, that there is no superhuman being who cares what becomes of mankind. And the vast majority of people have apparently been convinced. They show it by the way they live day in and day out. They go about their business from morning to night taking no counsel of God. True enough, they would not dream of admitting it and they are offended if anyone else does, but such paradoxical behavior is not unusual. Their refusal to be called unbelievers, like their continued attendance upon church services, though they do not subscribe to the church creed, merely shows that something holds them back from openly admitting what they take for granted six days of the week and most of the seventh. What is it that holds them back?

One thing that holds them back is human mortality. Much of the persisting theism is crisis theism. Many people, even of those who ordinarily give no thought to God, and who never lift a finger on behalf of the values of life most intimately associated with his name, are transformed into theists when confronted by the fact or thought of death. They cannot admit that death is the ruin of life, and since the existence of God is

required to save it from being just that, a sufficient belief to meet the emergency lingers, though inert, in the background of their minds. I admit that it is a shallow belief, one that does not pervade their lives but comes forward only to attend funerals, weddings, and like occasions, yet it may be singularly genuine while it lasts. It lifts the believer for the moment, however temporary his belief, above the struggle for material advantage. He is made tender toward failure. A mood of reverence is awakened and a sense of the mystery of life. In a word, he lives for the time being in his better impulses. And when the theistic mood has retired again to the outermost fringe of interest, which it often does with shocking suddenness, the good words that were spoken for God in the interim echo and re-echo in memory. It is these echoes which hold many people back from accepting an explanation of the world which leaves out God, and makes them feel that anyone who faces death in the same nontheistic spirit as he faces life must be exceptionally hardhearted, if not downright vicious.

No one would claim, I trust, that belief in God is a necessity for creatures who know that they must die. For one thing, few people are called upon to undergo the ordeal of their own death. As a rule they are planning to be alive when unconsciousness overtakes them, and when they die they know nothing about it. Since men have foresight and imagination, however, it is not enough for them to know that they will not experience dying, if they also know that the time will come when they will be dead. It is usually taken for granted that unless they are supported by the hope of immortality it is a kindness not to allude to their last hours.

Statistical evidence is not available one way or the other. If it were, we could show, I believe, that a certain personal quality, more than any belief a man holds for or against theism, determines his behavior in the expectation of death. I wonder whether the commander of a regiment could tell by the behavior of soldiers under fire, who was a believer and who was not. I wonder whether a sea captain whose ship is sinking could divide his sailors into the two classes. I wonder whether the confirmed criminal who walks with a firm step to his execution is sustained by theistic faith or by the same psychic hardness, reckless nerve, and need for display which made a life of crime attractive. And as for bravely bearing the death of others, I have never witnessed greater fortitude than that of devastated hearts for whom there was no balm in Gilead.

The crucial test of how a man will meet his own end is reserved for one who is snatched by the powerful arm of the law, and as he believes unjustly, out of active, sincere preoccupation with social reform and is condemned to die at a stated hour. By that test Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who was not upheld by faith in God, but by the vision of a social ideal for which he felt he was giving his life, and by the loyalty of friends, will bear compari-

son with Socrates. Since we are considering the possibility of meeting death without divine aid, it is well to recall the statement of Vanzetti when he was sentenced to die:

If it had not been for these things, I might have died unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as now we do by accident! Our words—our lives—our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph.

## v

Another reason for the retention of theism is man's low opinion of himself as a moral being. Thousands who leave God out when in practical pursuits, or in following the promptings of desire, are careful to keep him on hand for the sake of ideals. They feel that God is needed to validate and enforce the moral life. This they believe is especially true of "the masses." Without God, man is a purely natural creature and must act, so they think, like any other animal, though he may express his animality with superior shrewdness. A naturalistic attitude may suffice, indeed must suffice, when the need is one of feeding and housing men, keeping their bodies clean and healthy, increasing their efficiency as producers of material wealth; it can do nothing to make men decent human beings, and it is worse than useless in the attainment of moral character. Generosity, ethical idealism, civic-mindedness, interest in moral growth can be expected from none but those who are inspired by God.

To say it in another way, the higher life, however conceived, does not pay in its own terms, so that unless men believe in a God who makes good the losses incurred in living it, no one will find it attractive. A general acceptance of a nontheistic philosophy, so the argument runs, would "eat all nobility out of our conceptions of conduct and all worth out of our conception of life."

Here we have one of those persistent half-truths that manage to outlive repeated refutation. "But men are better," said Emerson, "than their theology. Their daily life gives it the lie. Every ingenuous and aspiring soul leaves the doctrine behind him in his own experience, and all men feel sometimes the falsehood which they cannot demonstrate." *Aspiration is much older than man's acquaintance with the gods, and it does not die when faith in them is lost.* A natural discontent with objects less perfect than they can be imagined, and the pursuit of idealized objects that stir the feelings, are the vital forces at work in men's upward striving. The visible results at a given time may seem slight; they are not slight when estimated over years and generations and centuries.

Evidence is everywhere about us, in the community where we live, in the street that runs by our door, in our own hearts. Men are aroused to adore supremely, to triumph over the cold hard misery of life, to serve and die without reward. I remember Justice Holmes and the Law, Jane Addams and World Peace, La Follette and the People. I think of Flaubert and his worship of Beauty, of "The Worst Journey in the World," made by three heroes to fill a gap in the evidence for Evolution. I stand with Captain Ahab on the deck of the *Pequod*, scanning the horizon for Moby Dick. I follow a lantern through the darkness and the churchyard to the tomb of the Capulets with its testimony to the power of romantic love. So my mind wanders on—for there is no end to the number and variety of examples of supreme devotion—wanders on until lost in the thicket of life. There I find devotion, heroism, self-sacrifice, loyalty to causes. What is it but this original virtue in human beings that faith in God draws upon to give itself vitality?

No; the conclusion cannot be withstood that greatness, from every point of view, has been achieved by individuals and by whole peoples in the absence of faith in God. Men can and do develop great conceptions of conduct, can and do devote themselves to social causes with enthusiasm and self-sacrifice, without counting on help from higher powers. Co-operative faith in the intelligent use of natural and human resources has provided a sufficient incentive to high-minded conduct.

The number of those who have adopted this platform as a working hypothesis for themselves, and are solicitous that it be tried on the largest possible scale, is growing. Say against these men and women what we please, we cannot truthfully say that they are the riffraff of human nature. In my judgment theirs is the only dependable type of idealism left to man in the modern world.

## vi

Perhaps the most plausible argument to be made against the foregoing considerations is that after all a study of the world in which we live discloses the slow working out of a great ethical purpose. And what can such a purpose be but the will of God? The evidence, however, does not, I think, support this interpretation.

In the first place, selection of the goal of natural events is premature. Suppose we were able to prove that a definite tendency is observable in the evolution of life on our globe, and suppose we could argue from tendency to *intendency*, neither of which we are in a position to do, we would still be unable to clinch the argument. *We have not seen the drama to the end.* Once it looked as if it were designed for fishes; then for reptiles; then for lower mammals. Now it may look as if designed for man. But the play is

not over. The curtain has not dropped. How can we talk about the climax of a performance of which we have witnessed only the opening scenes?

What have we actually observed? Has everything moved in a steadily maintained direction toward man as the culminating goal? Evolution has been an incredible spendthrift of life. Highly organized creatures have been developed again and again only to be pushed up blind alleys and left there to die. If there is a God whose method has been Evolution, his slogan must have been, "We'll fight it out along this line if it takes a billion years!" But, unlike Grant, he has always surrendered.

In this maelstrom the human species, as Thomas Huxley said—and he knew something about the subject—"plashed and floundered amid the general stream of evolution, keeping its head above water as best it might, and thinking neither of whence or whither." If the great scene we look upon, with its waxing and waning of suns, its appearance and disappearance of plant worlds, its rise and fall of animal dynasties—if all this or any part of it is the working out of a divine purpose, "friendly to man's intellectual, moral and religious education," this purpose is well hidden.

What if we disregard Evolution and examine human history? Do we then observe the unfolding of a divine plan? Do we find demonstrable proof of a Power not ourselves that sides with the ethical best? Does it thwart the wrongdoer and circumvent the morally indifferent? Do we, or do we not, see "the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree"? What happened to Socrates? To Jesus? According to the best authorities, they gave their lives to God and in the hour of their need he deserted them. They are conspicuous examples, but the fact which they illustrate is a commonplace of experience.

So far as the course of human life testifies, there is no indication that anything or anyone superhuman is bent upon the triumph of humane or ethical principles. *It seems to be up to us and us alone.* And since on the appearance of things man is forced to make shift with such powers as he can discover in himself and in his social and natural environment, why not be open and aboveboard at least about the appearances? Why not admit that for the practical realization of the good life we are obliged to act as we do in tilling the ground or baking bread, that is, to rely upon experimental knowledge to find out what it is we want and how to get it?

This surely offers a sufficient program for the most aspiring soul to work at. It has the added advantage of providing an escape from the chief risk of the ethical life, the danger of being victimized by our ideals. And we are less easily deceived by the type of leadership that would beguile our eyes from what we want to "higher things," in order that someone else may help himself to what he wants of things high or low.

If it is impossible to demonstrate the working presence of a divine ethical

purpose in the world, there are, in the second place, certain demonstrable facts which make the existence of any such purpose very doubtful. I avail myself of a statement made by Bishop Ernest William Barnes in one of the profoundest books I have read, *Scientific Theory and Religion*. I do this because Bishop Barnes cannot be suspected of twisting the facts against the theistic position, and because his writings are sincere not only in the usual sense that he refuses to say what he does not believe to be true, but in the far more unusual sense of taking the trouble to assure himself that he is justified, in view of the evidence at hand, to say what he does. The statement is this:

The whole process of creation now appears to be non-moral. There is no evidence to lead us to infer that variations in the genes are directed towards ends which in our judgment are good. In such variations there seems, in fact, to be no ethical quality whatever. They have led to odious parasitism, to the carnage of the jungle, to the microbic diseases which cause such suffering to humanity, to those animal appetites which are useful in the struggle for survival and are the basis of sin in man. This, the immoral, brutal, lustful side of creation is as characteristic as the parental self-sacrifice, the adventurous curiosity, the instinct for truth, the enthusiasm for righteousness, the beauty of form and the physical well-being which equally result from the evolving process.

In such facts as these "we are confronted," Bishop Barnes points out, "by a dilemma from which there is, at present, no escape." And he makes this further remark which, coming from him, should have a salutary effect: "Verbal dexterity and the skilful use of those evasive phrases which are too common in modern theology might seem to offer escape to some: but to the man of science evasion is high treason against truth." To which I add that unless theism can find a solution for just this dilemma, the best we can in truth say for the cosmos is that up to date it has not prevented the human experiment from being tried. Anything more is too much. . . .

## vii

For the reasons adduced in this chapter, and such as these, I have for myself arrived at an affirmative faith in the nonexistence of God. The affirmation is important. One may be *without* a belief in the *existence* of God or *have* a belief in the *nonexistence* of God. The two are not identical. Each is associated with distinctive further beliefs and distinctive individual and social commitments. What I desire to make clear without taking space to elaborate the point, is the tentative, undogmatic, yet outspoken character of the belief in question. It is essentially a kind of faith, but the kind of faith we act on in daily life when we call a doctor or drive an automo-



bile, in fact when we take any step whatever, a faith that is rooted in tested experience. It is militant, though not belligerent; convinced, but aware of difficulties in holding the position; an aggressive belief that is tempered by appreciative understanding of the motives and claims on the other side. . . .

CORLISS LAMONT

## The Ethics of Humanism\*

IN THE Humanist ethics the chief end of thought and action is to further this-earthly human interests on behalf of the greater happiness and glory of man. The watchword of Humanism is service to humanity in this existence as contrasted with the salvation of the individual soul in a future existence and the glorification of a supernatural Supreme Being. Humanism urges men to accept freely and joyously the great gift of life and to realize that life in its own right and for its own sake can be as beautiful and splendid as any dream of immortality.

The philosophy of Humanism constitutes a profound and passionate affirmation of the joys and beauties, the braveries and idealisms of existence upon this earth. It heartily welcomes all life-enhancing and healthy pleasures, from the vigorous enjoyments of youth to the contemplative delights of mellowed age, from the simple gratifications of food and drink, sunshine and sports, to the more complex appreciation of art and literature, friendship and social communion. Humanism believes in the beauty of love and the love of beauty. It exults in the pure magnificence of external Nature. All the many-sided possibilities for good in human living the Humanist would weave into a sustained pattern of happiness under the guidance of reason.

In this Humanist affirmation of life the monistic psychology again plays a most significant role. For this view means that in whatever he does man is a living unity of body and personality, an interfunctioning oneness of mental, emotional and physical qualities. Humanism adheres to the highest ethical ideals and fosters the so-called goods of the spirit, like those of culture and art and responsible citizenship. At the same time it insists that all ideals and values are grounded in this world of human experience

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\* From *Humanism as a Philosophy*, by Corliss Lamont, Chapter VI, pp. 273-297. Philosophical Library. Reprinted by permission. Footnotes omitted.

and natural forms. As Santayana puts it in summing up his conception of human nature, "everything ideal has a natural basis and everything natural an ideal development."

Much of the emphasis in supernaturalist ethics has been negative, calling on men continually to deny many of their most wholesome impulses in order to keep their souls pure and undefiled for that life after death which is so very much more important than life before death. In this ethics the prospect of supernatural rewards and punishments in the future overshadows present conduct; the values decreed by supernatural authority override those of the natural and temporal order in which man actually lives. The emphasis of Humanist and naturalistic ethics is *positive*, recommending the greater and more frequent enjoyment of earthly goods on the part of all men everywhere and unendingly. It is an ethics that repudiates ascetic other-worldliness in favor of buoyant this-worldliness. It is against all defeatist systems which either postpone happiness to an after-existence or recommend acquiescence to social injustice in this existence.

An excellent example of the typical religious defeatism that Humanism decries is the following consolation offered by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical of 1932, at the height of the Great Depression: "Let the poor and all those who at this time are facing the hard trial of want of work and scarcity of food, let them in a like spirit of penance suffer with greater resignation the privations imposed upon them by these hard times and the state of society, which Divine Providence in an ever-loving but inscrutable plan has assigned them. Let them accept with a humble and trustful heart from the hand of God the effects of poverty, rendered harder by the distress in which mankind now is struggling. . . . Let them take comfort in the certainty that their sacrifices and troubles borne in a Christian spirit will concur efficaciously to hasten the hour of mercy and peace."

Humanism sweeps aside the confusing and corrupting Dualism of the past in which "the natural life of man with its desires and pleasures became something to be shunned as evil and degraded, something to be forsaken for higher things. Man's true nature was of a different quality, his destiny lay in another realm. . . . It is this Dualism running through all of man's actions that has left its impress on the commonly accepted moral codes of the West to this day, and seems even yet to make impossible that whole-hearted and simple enjoyment of the goods of a natural existence that men now envy in the Greeks of old. It is not that men have ever refrained from action or from these pleasures, but that they have never been able to rid themselves of the notion that there is something essentially wrong about them."

The Humanist ethics is opposed to the puritanical prejudice against

pleasure and desire that marks the Western tradition of morality. Men and women have deep-seated wants and needs of an emotional and physical character, the fulfilment of which is an essential ingredient in the good life of the rounded personality. Contempt for or suppression of normal desires results in their working themselves out in surreptitious, coarse or abnormal ways. While it is true that uncontrolled human desires are the prime cause of evil in the world, it is equally true that human desires directed by reason toward socially useful goals are the prime foundation of good. They provide the drive and the energy that eventuate in individual and group achievement in the good society.

The reasonable self-restraint that Humanism favors has little in common with the constant sense of guilt encouraged by the traditional Christian ethics. A central proposition in that ethics is the original sin and inherent wickedness of man; and one of its special stresses is that the sex impulse in human beings is essentially base and bad, Adam's original sin being transmitted from generation to generation through the act of procreation. Thus the Christian Church, in order to establish the complete purity of Jesus, felt obliged to assume that he was born of a virgin in violation of ordinary biological laws. Due in large part to the influence of Christianity, immorality in the minds of most people in the West became synonymous with improper sex conduct.

Humanist ethics of course recognizes the necessity of high standards in relations between the sexes, but it does not regard sex emotions in themselves as in any sense evil. And it insists that from a moral viewpoint the sex life of an individual is no more important than his political or economic life. In fact, Humanism asserts that perhaps the most pressing ethical need of our time is the establishment of higher standards of action in the fields of politics and economics. A man can be an exemplary husband and father and at the same time be dishonest in business affairs or engage in political graft. Past over-emphasis on the sex aspect of morals has led to a neglect of its other aspects and a narrowing of its range.

The realm of ethics is pre-eminently social in scope and application; within its sphere lies all human conduct in which socially significant alternatives are possible. Many small everyday acts have no ethical significance, though any type of action may under certain circumstances carry such significance. In origin and development ethics is likewise social, the term itself coming from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning custom or usages. Ethical values and standards evolve in the interaction between individual and individual, between the individual and the group, and between group and group. The sympathetic impulses in human nature, such as the parental, the sexual and the gregarious, become socially transformed and broadened in human association.

The advantages of mutual cooperation, support and protection lead to the social functioning and utilization of basic instincts such as those of self-preservation and reproduction. Conscience in human beings, the sense of right and wrong and the insistent call of one's better, more idealistic, more social-minded self, is a social product. Feelings of right and wrong that at first have their locus within the family gradually develop into a pattern for the tribe or city, then spread to the much larger unit of the nation, and finally from the nation to mankind as a whole. Humanism sees no need for resorting to supernatural explanations or sanctions at any point in the ethical process. A supernatural First Cause or Sustaining Principle is no more necessary in the sphere of ethics than in that of physics or cosmology.

In the making of ethical decisions the Humanist relies, as in any endeavor to solve a problem correctly, upon the use of reason approaching as closely as possible to the method of science, instead of upon religious revelation, or any sort of authority or intuition. For Humanism no human acts are good or bad in or of themselves. Whether an act is good or bad is to be judged by its consequences for the individual and society. Knowledge of the good, then, must be worked out, like knowledge of anything else, through the examination and evaluation of the concrete consequences of an idea or hypothesis. Humanist ethics draws its guiding principles *from* human experience and tests them *in* human experience. Since, as I pointed out in the last chapter, knowledge of anything is in the first instance never immediate, there can be no immediate knowledge of the right. However, once we have established or accepted a regulative principle of morality, we are able to *use* it immediately thereafter.

In Humanism's stress upon the need and value of intelligence in the ethical enterprise, its approach differs once again from that of the traditional Christian ethics. Though Humanism naturally incorporates certain of the generous social ideals voiced by Jesus, it finds little in the New Testament that can be considered as an appeal to reason. The appeal of Jesus was primarily designed to bring about a change in the heart of man; and this transformation was to be wrought by individuals receiving insight and inspiration from a personal God. Deeply imbedded in the Christian tradition was an antagonism toward the intellect, expressed originally in the myth that God punished Adam for disobeying the divine prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. And supernatural religions in general have been very distrustful of human reliance on reason. The ethical tradition in which the human mind, unprompted by any supernatural agency, was regarded as able to attain moral truth came down from ancient Greek philosophy, notably that of Aristotle, and from modern thinkers like Spinoza.

The Humanist submits every ethical precept of the past to the searching analysis of reason, forcing it to justify itself in the light of present circumstances. For Humanism well realizes that all ethical laws and systems are relative to the particular historical period and to the particular culture of which they are a part. What was good for the Old Testament Hebrews some 4,000 years ago or for the Greeks in 400 B.C. or for Europeans only 100 years ago is not necessarily good for Americans living in the fifth decade of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in the world today there are a considerable number of different nations and peoples, some of them in quite dissimilar stages of historical development. It would not be fair to judge the Chinese altogether by American standards; and standards that we may take as ethically well established in the United States today may be in their formative phases in countries less developed in a cultural, economic and political sense. These remarks do not mean, of course, that moral standards are merely subjective or that we cannot learn a great deal from the ethical systems of the past.

Clearly, however, ethical rules of conduct become out-of-date as conditions change and time marches on. In general the advance of science and invention has affected ethical philosophy to an immense degree. Modern medicine, for instance, has demonstrated that many undesirable human traits which used to be ascribed to original sin or bad character are actually attributable to glandular insufficiencies or deep-seated emotional frustrations. The discovery and dissemination of scientific birth control techniques are naturally of vital significance in the sphere of sex morality. The growth of mechanized, urban civilization in recent centuries has both altered long-established ethical standards based on a primitive agricultural civilization and given rise to innumerable new ethical problems. A twentieth-century invention like the automobile demands a new and special code of ethics for the millions of drivers; reckless driving that threatens life and limb has become one of the major immoralities. This is a field in which the law rightly steps in to regularize and enforce proper standards of safety.

The multiplication of fresh ethical problems of a complex character in our present-day society shows the need not only for the moral flexibility that Humanism advocates, but also for the use of intelligence in determining what action or actions are right and good in each case. The function of basic moral principles, expressing the funded wisdom of human experience, is not to provide absolute rules of conduct that will automatically tell men just what to do under all circumstances. Their function "is to supply standpoints and methods which will enable the individual to make for himself an analysis of the elements of good and evil in the particular situation in which he finds himself." That analysis should always take into

consideration the surrounding circumstances, the total context of a specific situation.

Humanism teaches the formation of sound moral habits as well as of guiding moral principles, but believes that neither habits nor principles should grow too set or rigid. The highest ethical duty is often to discard the outmoded ethics of the past; it is a truism to say that the merely good is the enemy of the better. The Humanist refuses to accept any Ten Commandments or other ethical precepts as immutable and universal laws never to be challenged or questioned. He bows to no alleged supreme moral authority either past or present.

This is one way in which the Humanist continually reasserts the moral freedom that goes together with his moral responsibility. The act of willing this or that, of choosing among various courses of conduct, is central in the realm of ethics. And I believe firmly that in making his ethical decisions, it is man's prerogative to have true freedom of choice. The chief reasons for this position I gave in Chapter IV. There are two main types of ethical decision in which human freedom functions. First, we have the situation in which one is sincerely perplexed over what is the right thing to do and chooses a certain line of action after considerable deliberation. Second, we have the situation in which one quickly realizes, from past experience, what one ought to do, but is tempted not to do it because some insistent personal desire points in a different direction. In this kind of situation the *I ought* implies the freedom of *I can; but need not*.

In the first type of case one of the most difficult classes of problems to settle revolves around the proper relationship between means and ends. The enunciation of ethical ideals is mere sentimentality unless effective means can be envisaged for eventually fulfilling them. It is the role of intelligence to formulate such means. Does this imply, then, that the end justifies the means? No, that is much too loose a generalization and is like asking "Is the object worth the price?" It is impossible to give a meaningful answer to this very general question, unless we know the precise object that is under consideration and the exact price that is being demanded.

No responsible person really believes that *any* object justifies *any* price any more than he believes that *any* end justifies *any* means. But we can say, and everyone with an ounce of common sense must agree, that *some* objects justify *some* prices and that *some* ends justify *some* means. In getting at the ethical significance of a means-end situation it is always necessary to be specific and inquire, "Does this particular end or set of ends justify this particular means or groups of means?"

In the realm of social tact and personal relations most of us do not hesitate to tell "white lies" occasionally in order to escape from the incen-

sant interruptions of the telephone, the embarrassment of sudden and unexpected callers or the over-enthusiasm of friends or family in trying to draw us into this or that activity. Doctors also resort to white lies when they deceive a sick man as to the seriousness of his illness, in order to prevent worry and fear that might aggravate his condition. Thus white lies of one sort or another constitute a compromise with our ideals of honesty and an example of allowing certain ends to justify means that are ordinarily unacceptable.

To take a more important class of cases, consider the matter of violence and coercion. Is it justifiable to use the bad means of violence in order to further an end generally recognized as good? Well, even a professional pacifist would no doubt grant that it is legitimate to shoot a mad dog which is about to attack a small child. And most persons would not wish to advocate the disbanding of municipal police departments, even though policemen sometimes abruptly kill robbers or murderers who are escaping from the scene of a crime. In fact, our entire legal system depends in the last analysis upon the state's coercive powers of enforcement. Plainly, then, in the present stage of civilization, force and the threat of force are ethically justifiable under certain circumstances.

Attempting to formulate a general rule, I would say that in judging whether any particular means is ethically justifiable for the accomplishment of a certain end, we must in the first place endeavor to estimate impartially the *total consequences* of using that means, including possible deleterious effects on the end desired. A certain means may well alter the very end for which it was brought into play; the question is precisely how and to what extent. A particular means may have unfortunate by-products and yet be justified because it achieves the main end in view. Even when a drastic means completely negates the desired end, as when a severe operation results in the death of the patient, we cannot necessarily conclude that the means was not justified.

This leads me to state, in the second place, that we cannot fairly evaluate the ethical implications of utilizing a specific means unless we consider the possible alternatives, unless we determine the probable consequences of *not* using that particular means. In many a case the best chance of saving a sick man from death is to take the risk of having him undergo a major operation. When it comes to broad social problems, unhappily we are not applying our means in a society that is already perfect; and as long as the system under which we live remains imperfect, we cannot hope to change it through altogether perfect methods. Yet there are many amateur moralists in circulation who apparently do expect just that. With their extraordinary propensity for thinking in a vacuum, they set up an ideal standard of conduct and then condemn anything that falls short of it,



regardless of consequences and alternatives, regardless of how the actions both of unreliable friends and of unscrupulous enemies limit the means which individuals and groups can use with efficacy. Another way of expressing this point is to say that choosing the lesser evil sometimes results in the greater good.

What I have been saying implies a constant and close relationship between means and ends and a recognition that, in the main, means are just as important as ends. In fact, there is a continuous succession of means and ends; and a certain means is often so important that it becomes an end in itself, while an end achieved often becomes the means to another end beyond. A child goes to an elementary school as a means of becoming prepared for High School or private secondary school; but his work in the elementary school is of sufficient importance to make its successful conclusion a thoroughly worth-while end in itself. The boy then goes to High School, which is a means to entering college but also a significant end in itself. The young man's years at college, too, are both means and end: a means to his successful career in mature life and a most important end in the training of his mind and the broadening of his education.

Means and ends, then, together constitute essential stages in an onflowing continuum of activity that is literally endless. Their artificial separation accounts for much that is bad in present-day society. Perhaps the worst of such separations is between the average person's work and his life as a whole, the treating of his job as merely instrumental to making money. Ideally, one's occupation should be significant and enjoyable in itself and thereby an end as well as a means. Much of the confusion regarding means and ends derives from the Christian tradition in which mundane life was regarded as a mere means, a toilsome pilgrimage, toward the supreme end of heavenly bliss.

We see a somewhat comparable split between means and ends when fanatics, frequently bursting with noble intentions, set up some far-off earthly end as all-important and try to persuade people to make literally everything they do subordinate, in the form of means, to this one goal. This leads to an extreme sort of future-worship and the neglect of men's present rights to happiness and their immediate opportunities for it. If human beings are to be happy and enjoy life, it must always be during some period of time describable as *now*. What the future-worshippers do is to ask each succeeding generation to sacrifice itself in working exclusively on behalf of a distant Utopia that may or may not some day arrive. The Humanist asserts that, from the viewpoint of human happiness and the sum total of good, today is just as significant as tomorrow and the current year just as significant as any a decade hence.

Another common but unacceptable cleavage in traditional ethics besides that between means and end is the cleavage between motive and act. Kant is the prototype of those philosophers who over-emphasize the matter of motives, since he sets up the possession of a good will, aside from the consequences of the acts for which it is responsible, as the test of goodness and makes the absolutely pure soul with pure motives the ideal of individual morality. This Kantian notion stems from a supernaturalistic, mind-body dualism and leads to the superficial doctrine that the re-making of society depends solely upon the moral regeneration of the individual as contrasted with systematic changes and reforms of an institutional character.

It would be likewise one-sided, however, to go to the other extreme from the Kantian ethics and claim that we can evaluate the ethical quality of a man through his overt actions alone. For intentions do enter as an important factor into the ethical significance of human conduct. The fact is that there is no sharp separation between motive and action; a total action consists of *both* the motive and the concrete act. This view is written into our accepted law. Thus an enormous difference exists, involving the imposition of the death penalty, between technical manslaughter, as when the driver of an automobile accidentally runs over and kills someone, and first-degree murder, as when a man kills with deliberate intent. On the other hand, by establishing the offense of criminal negligence, the law recognizes that absence of a bad motive is not always a sufficient excuse.

The reason why Humanism brings motives into the picture as an important element in any ethical situation is because of their over-all consequences. The animating and persistent dispositions of men, be these dispositions good or bad, lead on the whole to concrete actions and effects of a determinate nature. A person with the best of intentions may do something which accidentally injures others. But we do not judge him entirely in terms of this one act, because his motives in general are of a sort that result in other acts and consequences which, broadly considered, seem conducive to the social welfare.

The attribution of low motives to people whose ideas or conduct you do not like is a favorite pastime throughout the world. It should be obvious, however, that it is rather difficult to gauge with accuracy the complex subjective states that lead a man to this or that action or opinion. Humanists, therefore, are chary of passing sweeping moral judgments on other people. Even the wisest of men hardly possesses the knowledge and impartiality to render a Last Judgment on himself or anyone else. Nevertheless, increasingly during these terrific times men adopt the attitude that those who differ with them on some current issue are absolute scoun-

drels and utterly damned. Yet needless to state, reasonable and morally worthy persons can sincerely disagree on the great controversies of the day. The average mind still being a somewhat imperfect instrument, even outright inconsistency is seldom a sure sign of hypocrisy. Intellectual intolerance and moral arrogance on the part of those who may themselves ultimately be proved mistaken are at the opposite pole from the true spirit of philosophy.

The whole question of motivation is fundamental to the Humanist philosophy. For one of the great aims of Humanism is the transformation and socialization of human motives. This is a sector where human nature can be drastically reconditioned and reshaped. What the scientific study of human motives shows is that human nature is neither essentially bad nor essentially good, neither essentially selfish nor essentially unselfish, neither essentially warlike nor essentially pacific. There is neither original sin nor original virtue. But human nature *is* essentially flexible and educable. And the moulding or re-moulding of human motives is something that takes place not only in childhood and youth, but also throughout adult life and under the impact of those fundamental economic institutions and cultural compulsives that so weightily influence mind and character. The social development and conditioning of human beings, their training, direct and indirect, by means of all sorts of educational techniques, can be so extensive that the hoary half-truth, "You can't change human nature," becomes quite irrelevant.

Humanism believes that in ethical training, while sufficient attention must naturally be given to the process of self-cultivation, equal emphasis should be laid on the individual's relation to society, his unending debt to the collective culture of mankind and his corresponding obligation to serve the common good. Humanism holds that even the more highly developed intelligent self-interest, such as Plato discusses in his *Dialogues*, is not sufficient as an ultimate ethical sanction. For intelligence operating on behalf of an evil will is precisely the definition of Satan. A first-rate mind always acting at the behest of self-interest does not necessarily result in a person's furthering the welfare of the community. There may and do occur situations that ethically demand the very last measure of personal sacrifice and in which, therefore, no form of mere individual self-interest will be adequate. Neither the capable mind nor the good will acting alone and in isolation can be depended upon for genuine ethical achievement; both functioning together make the ideal partnership from the Humanist standpoint.

The theory that everyone invariably acts from self-interest, direct or indirect, is psychologically unsound. The simple fallacy behind that theory consists, as Dr. Dewey states, "in transforming the (truistic) fact

of acting *as* a self into the fiction of always acting *for* self." Now obviously a man does act frequently on behalf of himself alone; but also he can and does act on behalf of other people and large social objectives. He may well obtain personal satisfaction in so doing, but the gaining of that satisfaction is not necessarily his original and primary goal.

There are many situations demanding courage or heroism in which a man has time to think through the main implications and consequences before taking action. If his final decision involves his risking or even giving up his life in a good cause, you may say that he is pursuing his self-interest because he is a believer in supernatural religion and expects to receive his reward in heaven. Traditional Christianity has indeed preached and encouraged a self-interest ethics in this sense of building up credits for an after-existence. But suppose the individual has no faith in immortality and yet follows a course that he knows is quite certain to end his earthly career. How can we possibly reduce to self-interest his decision to surrender what he considers his one and only life?

In fact, throughout history and especially during modern times, there have been millions of men and women with some sort of Humanist philosophy who have consciously given up their lives for a social ideal. Of course they have wanted to devote themselves to that ideal and have been willing to make the supreme sacrifice for it. Yet because an individual desires to do a thing does not prove at all that he desires to do it from mere self-interest. In the case of dying for a cause, such as the welfare of his country or of humanity, he may truly desire the good of country or mankind above everything else, even above his own self-preservation. Or in the narrower setting of close personal relationship a man may care for his wife, his child or his friend literally more than he cares for himself.

Intense interest in other people or in society as a whole is, to be sure, an interest manifested by a self, but that does not make it synonymous with self-interest. To call genuine self-sacrifice or patriotism or public service forms of self-interest is to stretch the connotation of *self-interest* to cover its opposite, so that it loses its distinctive meaning. And there can be no doubt that much of the age-long controversy on this subject of self-interest has been due to verbal confusion and to the illegitimate practice of the self-interest school in trying to get rid of altruism by defining it out of existence.

The self-interest theory has been closely tied up in the history of thought with the ethical view that pleasure is and should be the goal of human endeavor. This pleasure ethics is founded on a false analysis of human nature. For scientific psychology demonstrates that we do not in the first instance desire an object because it gives us pleasure, but that it gives us pleasure because we desire it. We enjoy a tender, well-cooked steak

because we desire it in terms of bodily need and hunger; if we are already satiated with food, we have no appetite for a steak. It is really objects that we immediately desire, the accompanying pleasure being a welcome by-product and a sign that the object is one that we fundamentally want, something that is basically congenial to our nature. Feelings of pleasure cannot be automatically produced, since they are inseparably bound up with our experiencing of objects that are agreeable to us and that we positively desire only under certain conditions. This is a decisive reason why the direct and self-conscious pursuit of pleasure is not likely to succeed and to bring lasting satisfaction.

Applying this analysis to the larger problem of ethical reflection and decision in regard to the general good, we see that an individual certainly possesses the psychological power of setting up social aims as among his primary objects of desire; the pleasure or happiness that may result from his furthering those aims is then secondary and derivative. Thus Humanism affirms the psychological possibility and the ethical desirability of intelligent altruism. There is nothing more shallow than those sophisticates who insist on reducing all human conduct to personal self-interest and who persist in saying that egoism is more "natural" than altruism. Neither egoism nor altruism is an original characteristic of human nature; both, however, are potential dispositions of the personality. Thinkers who claim that complete selfishness is an inborn quality of human beings are taking over and expressing in different language one of the great errors of Christian ethics, namely that man is inherently sinful and depraved.

The more extreme forms of self-interest are, in truth, equivalent to ordinary selfishness, in which there is a deficiency of consideration for others and in which an individual fulfils his needs and desires to the detriment of someone else. Obviously self-regard in the sense of keeping healthy, acquiring an education, earning a living and finding a congenial life partner of the opposite sex is something to be encouraged. Self-cultivation in general and during youth in particular is by no means opposed to the social good; indeed, it helps to build a personality which can thereby render greater service to society. Similarly a sense of personal pride in fine workmanship redounds to the advantage of the community. It is not Humanism's intent that an individual should belittle the value of his self in affirming that of other selves.

The significant point ethically speaking is not the truism that it is always some self that has interests; it is the *kind* of interests that any self has. The self or personality is not a fixed, simple and ready-made entity standing behind a man's activities and directing them; that idea is a holdover from the supernatural doctrine of a divinely created soul—

complete in all essentials—entering the body from on high. The human personality is a fluid, developing, growing complex of habits, impulses, and ideas that is never finished and is always in the making *through* its activities and interests.

The unity of the self is not something one starts with, but something one may achieve, and even then only in a relative sense. Of course the self can change for the worse as well as for the better. In any case the range and quality of an individual's interests come to define in large measure the nature of his self. A man *is* what he does and likes to do. The Humanist concept of a growing, expanding personality, which comes to include social aims and ideals as an integral part of the self, cancels out the false antithesis of the individual *versus* society.

The concept of an always selfish self is a cultural product and today goes hand in hand with a social system that sets up economic self-interest in the form of money-making and profit-making as the primary motive capable of stimulating men to productive effort. In philosophy the self-interest theory of ethics received its most precise and mature formulation in the writings of the nineteenth-century Utilitarians, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. In this regard their work, though quite humanistic in its total effect, was the philosophic counterpart of the profit-motive theory of Adam Smith and other exponents of laissez-faire economics.

In America's present capitalist society, with its constant emphasis on the profit motive and competitive individualism, there is a tendency to look upon those who support a broader and more scientific view of human motivation as intellectual crack-pots; and to consider those who try to practice altruism as impossibly naive or afflicted with a martyr complex. Amateur psychoanalysts and half-baked Freudians are fond of explaining away manifestations of social idealism in terms of some obscure neurosis. They assume that normal people function on the basis of self-interest and that therefore militant social idealism must be due to peculiar quirks in the human personality. Yet it is obviously fantastic to maintain that a deep desire for social justice, any more than a passion for truth, necessarily springs from some sort of personal neurosis or maladjustment.

Despite its criticism of the self-interest morality, the ethics of Humanism is cognizant of how deeply rooted in our economic and cultural situation are both the theory and practice of crude self-interest. Humanism is realistic in that it fully recognizes to what an extent men are bent in a wrong direction by propaganda and cultural conditioning which appeal to, reinforce and spur on the selfish and violent impulses. Humanism is further realistic in understanding that in the last analysis "the refutation of egoism consists in the *eradication* of egoism, that is, changing the actual feelings, desires and attitudes of those who are egoists." This clearly

cannot be done simply by trying to preach, talk and argue men out of habits and actions that run counter to the social good.

Hence Humanism considers it most essential to carry through a systematic and skilful program of training the motives and the emotions so that the social and sympathetic tendencies of human beings will be encouraged rather than the more egoistic ones. Without exception the great thinkers on the subjects of morality have agreed that a cardinal aim of ethical education is to develop men and women who find pleasure and happiness in doing right, and pain and unhappiness in doing wrong. Social conditioning, working upon plastic human nature with all the new techniques of twentieth-century teaching, communication and advertising, can accomplish wonders either for good or for bad.

The role of reason in this situation is not to act as a force contrary to the emotions and to assume the impossible task of driving them out or suppressing them; that would be partly to adopt the ethics of the old supernaturalism. The function of individual and community intelligence is to re-direct emotional life and to replace anti-social passions, motives, ambitions and habits by those that are geared to the common good. Even those deep-seated tendencies of hate and aggression that psychoanalysts say practically all human beings harbor within can be harnessed to a constructive purpose and directed against such evils as poverty, disease, tyranny and war.

In Humanism's general scheme of education nothing is more important from an ethical viewpoint than teaching boys and girls, men and women, how to reason correctly and use their minds to handle the myriad problems of life. Such teaching must be aware that reason is "not a ready-made antecedent which can be invoked at will and set into movement. . . . It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires . . . a laborious achievement of habit needing to be continually worked over." The irrational impulses of human beings have played an enormous role in bringing recurring disasters upon mankind and remain a sinister danger in contemporary affairs. For the Humanist, stupidity is just as great a sin as selfishness; and "the moral obligation to be intelligent" ranks always among the highest of duties.

SIDNEY HOOK

## Democracy and Equality\*

ANY ADEQUATE description of the nature of democracy must at the very least do justice to customary usage which distinguishes between democratic and nondemocratic societies and between historic phases within any one society, regarded as more or less democratic in relation to each other. Although for propaganda purposes even totalitarian states claim to be democratic "in a higher sense," their canonic writings recognize the differences between the structure of these states and those considered democratic in a less esoteric sense. This is often betrayed in the adjectives prefixed to the latter like "so-called," "alleged," "parliamentary," or "bourgeois." Germany and Russia and Italy are not democratic states; England and the United States are. And when historians examine the development of English and American society they unanimously acknowledge, although they evaluate the fact differently, that these societies were less democratic when property, racial, or religious qualifications were set for citizenship than they are today when these qualifications have been eliminated or reduced.

What principle is expressed in these customary distinctions? The principle may be stated in various ways, but for our purposes we may say that a democratic state is one in which the basic decisions of government rest upon the freely given consent of the governed. This obviously is only a beginning. For just as soon as we begin to investigate the conditions which must be present before we grant that a state lives up to this principle, we are carried beyond the sphere of political considerations into the domain of ethics. Thus, if information has been withheld or withdrawn before consent is assessed; if the opposition is muzzled or suppressed so that consent is as unanimous as a totalitarian plebiscite; or if economic sanctions are threatened against a section of the community in the event that

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consent takes one form or another, we declare that the "spirit" or "logic" or "rationale" of democracy is absent from its political forms. If birth does not give divine right, neither does numbers. We are all acquainted with situations in which we say that a political democracy has traduced its own ideals. Whenever we criticize existing states which conform to the political definition of democracy on the ground that they are not democratic enough; whenever we point out that Athenian democracy was limited only to free men, or that in some parts of the American South it is limited only to white men, or in some countries it is limited only to men, we are invoking a broader principle of democracy as a controlling reference in our judgments of comparison. This principle is an ethical one.

What is this principle of ethical democracy? It is a principle of equality—an equality not of status or origin but of opportunity, relevant functions, and social participation. The enormous literature and bitter controversy which center around the concept of equality indicate that it is only a little less ambiguous than the concept of democracy. It is necessary, therefore, to block it off from some current notions before developing the argument.

(a) The principle of equality is not a *description* of fact about men's physical or intellectual natures. It is a *prescription* or policy of treating men.

(b) It is not a prescription to treat men in identical ways who are unequal in their physical or intellectual nature. It is a policy of equality of concern or consideration for men whose different needs may require differential treatment.

(c) It is not a mechanical policy of equal opportunity for everyone at any time and in all respects. A musical genius is entitled to greater opportunities to develop his musical talents than someone who is tone deaf. It is equality of opportunity for all individuals to develop whatever personal and socially desirable talents they possess and to make whatever unique contributions their capacities permit.

(d) It is not a demand for absolute uniformity of living conditions or even for arithmetically equal compensation for socially useful work. It demands that, when the productive forces of a society make possible the gratification of basic human needs (which are, of course, historical variables), no one should be deprived of necessities in order to provide others with luxuries.

(e) It is not a policy of restricting the freedom of being different or becoming different. It is a policy of *encouraging* the freedom to be different, restricting only that exercise of freedom which converts talents or possessions into a monopoly that frustrates the emergence of other free personalities.

(f) It is not a demand that all people be leaders or that none should be.

It does demand that the career of leadership, like all other careers, be open to all whose natural or acquired talents qualify them; that everyone have a say in the process of selecting leaders; that the initiative of leaders operate within a framework of basic laws; and that these laws in turn ultimately rest upon the freely given consent of the persons who constitute the community.

(g) It does not make the assumption of sentimental humanitarianism that all men are naturally good. It does assume that men, treated as equals in a community of persons, may become better. The emphasis upon respect for the personality of all individuals, the attitude which treats the personality not as something fixed but as a growing, developing pattern, is unique to the philosophy of democracy.

What I have been trying to show is that the logic of the democrat's position compels him to go beyond the limited conception of political democracy—the equality of freedom—to a broader attitude extending to those other phases of social existence that bear upon the effective exercise of equality of freedom. This in fact has been the historical tendency observable wherever democratic principles and programs are permitted to operate. Perhaps the synoptic phrase "social equality," whose connotations encompass political, educational, and economic democracy, may be taken as the most appropriate expression of the meaning of democracy in the broadest sense.

It is clear that the principle of equality, like any principle of justice, cannot by itself determine what is specifically right or good in each concrete case. But whatever the right is discovered to be, from the point of view of democracy it is the result of an analysis which considers equally the needs of all the persons involved in the situation; and, further, whatever the good is, it becomes better to the extent that it is shared among other members of the community. It is also clear that in concrete situations there will be conflicts between various demands for equality and that in negotiating these conflicts the methods of intelligence are indispensable for a functioning democracy. If empiricism be a generic term for the philosophic attitude which submits *all* claims of fact and value to test by experience, then empiricism as a philosophy is more congenial to a democratic than to an anti-democratic community, for it brings into the open light of criticism the interests in which moral values and social institutions are rooted. Empiricism so conceived is commitment to a procedure, not to a theory of metaphysics.

In this brief account of the nature of democracy as a way of life I have not aimed at an exhaustive analysis of the *forms* in which it may be expressed but have tried to indicate the basic ideals which are involved in the customary usage of the term and in the implications of that usage.

## THE JUSTIFICATION OF DEMOCRACY

We now come to the problem which is of primary concern to philosophers. What are the grounds on which we can justify our acceptance of democracy in contradistinction to other modes of social life? So far as I can see there are four generic types of justification which have been or can be offered.

The first asserts that the rational foundation of democratic belief consists in a set of supernatural religious truths in the sense that there can be no intelligent ground for choosing between democracy and other forms of society which does not logically commit us to some kind of theology.

The second asserts the same thing about metaphysics understood as a theory of "reality." Usually these two approaches go hand in hand.

The third maintains that the choice of democracy is a nonrational preference rooted in the constitution of our natures and brought to flower by nurture and education.

The fourth affirms that the belief in democracy is a hypothesis controlled by the same general pattern of inquiry which we apply to any scientific hypothesis but referring to different subject matter, i.e., our evaluations.

## I. DEMOCRACY AND RELIGION

Does democracy as a way of life rest upon belief in supernatural religious truths in the sense that, if the latter are denied, the former must necessarily be denied? It is becoming increasingly fashionable to maintain this. Were historical considerations relevant here, I think it could be conclusively established that the great institutional religions, with the possible exception of some forms of Protestantism, have tended in fact to support theocratic forms of government. . . .

But our concern is not with historical questions, fascinating as they are, but with the logic of the position. We must consequently rephrase the question to read: Does belief in democracy logically rest upon any theological propositions in the sense that the denial of the second entails the denial of the first? And for this discussion I shall take as illustrative of theological propositions the two cardinal propositions of natural theology, viz., "God exists" and "Man has an immortal soul." To assert that whoever has no grounds for affirming the existence of God and immortality has no grounds for affirming the validity of democracy is to claim that the former are at least necessary conditions of the latter. I shall argue that they constitute neither necessary nor sufficient conditions.

(a) Before examining this claim, let us note the tremendous risk it involves. Were those who advance it ever compelled to admit that these

theological propositions are indemonstrable or false, they would have to surrender their belief in democracy. But this, I submit, very few of them are prepared to do. They would search for other reasons and grounds. Like those who would make the validity of moral judgments dependent upon the existence of God and immortality, the theological defenders of democracy shift a problem in which, although difficult, it is possible to reach an agreement on the basis of some empirical evidence to one in which the nature of the terms and sphere of discourse makes such agreement much more difficult. Confirmed democrats, it seems to me, are much more convinced of the validity of the democratic ideal than they are of the theological propositions upon which it presumably depends. They would no more exonerate an atheist or agnostic who pleaded that he had no reason to believe in God and the hereafter from the obligation of accepting the democratic ideal than they would from the obligation of living honestly.

(b) Aside from the difficulties of establishing God's existence, how can we get from the fact of his existence to the desirability of the democratic way of life? None of the attributes of God, save the moral attributes, can serve as a premise justifying one way of life rather than another. And if the moral attributes of God can serve as premises, necessary or sufficient, for the democratic way of life, it is only because *we* regard them as worthy, i.e., as truly moral. Obviously any theology which makes God's power the justification or source of this goodness is worse than useless for purposes of deriving democracy. The attribution of moral qualities to God is an expression of what we think his qualities ought to be. And this is a problem of precisely the same order as we are called upon to answer when we ask for the grounds of our democratic allegiance.

(c) The situation is the same if we grant that human beings have immortal souls. In what way is this a necessary or sufficient presupposition of democracy? The brotherhood of man may be a theological fact as it is a biological fact, but what makes it wrong for Cain to kill his brother Abel and right, under certain circumstances, for us to kill Cain is a moral principle which can no more be derived from theology than from biology—unless, of course, the moral principle is one of the premises of our theological (or biological) system. In which case we are no further along than we were when we raised the question about the democratic way of life. . . .

## 2. DEMOCRACY AND METAPHYSICS

The evidence seems to me to be overwhelming that there is a definite historical connection between the social movements of a period and its dominant metaphysical teachings; further, I am prepared to defend as a historically true proposition that systems of idealistic metaphysics, because of

these semiofficial roles they have played in their respective cultures, have been more generally employed to bolster antidemocratic social movements than systems of empirical or materialistic metaphysics. Whether there is always an intrinsic personal or psychological relation between a philosopher's metaphysics and his ethics or politics is a more difficult question, but one which seems to me to require an answer in the negative. But more germane to our present concern is my contention that there is no necessary logical connection between a theory of being or becoming and any particular theory of ethics or politics. Stated more accurately, it seems to me demonstrable that no system of metaphysics univocally determines a system of ethics or politics. There may be certain facts about man and nature which might have a bearing upon our judgment about what social system is of the highest worth, but, as I shall argue later, these are facts concerning which the empirical sciences are qualified to report without benefit of metaphysics.

Two species of metaphysics are most often invoked in behalf of democracy. One asserts that the value of democracy or the values from which it may be derived are "grounded in reality," a phrase which is interpreted to mean that the universe "justifies" or "guarantees" both the validity and the ultimate supremacy of basic human ideals. I must confess that it is difficult for me to understand this view except as a shamefaced kind of theology. But however that may be, there is no agreed-upon denotation of *the* universe. There are many universes. Nor is there any one basic human ideal but many human ideals which are often in conflict with one another, even though they all invoke the universe as a ground of their validity and as a guaranty of their triumph. Finally, and most important, no matter what character the universe is alleged to have, no matter what the nature of the far-off event toward which it is moving, no matter who wins or loses, nothing logically compelling in the way of judgment follows unless *we* have already morally evaluated the character of events. For most metaphysicians the very word "reality" is an implicit value term. To be sure, history may be conceived as a struggle between the Prince of Darkness and the Prince of Light, but the latter is so named because he carries *our* moral flag.

The second metaphysical view to which resort is often made is at the same time a kind of rejoinder to our position. It distinguishes between a metaphysical realm of being and a metaphysical realm of values and grounds the democratic way of life in the latter. Just as the spectrum of colors is there to be beheld by all who are not color-blind and would still be there even if man's ancestors had climbed no higher than the mole in the tree of evolution, so the spectrum of values is there to be beheld by all who are not value-blind and would still be there even if human beings had

never existed at all. The view that colors would still be there even if human beings had no eyes is not without its difficulties. But they do not begin to compare in difficulty with the view that values are essentially unrelated to an evaluator and his interests. Santayana has quite aptly remarked of this doctrine that there is much sense in saying that whiskey "is pervaded as it were, by an inherent intoxication, and stands dead drunk in its bottle."

The subject is vast, but it is enough to show that this view is question-begging in precisely the same way as other theological and metaphysical derivations. The existence of these absolute norms is presumably certified or authenticated at some point by an act of immediate intuition. If the testimony of the intuition is construed not merely from what individuals *say* they intuit but from the conduct that flows from their intuition—and conduct counts more in any moral scheme than mere words—then it is clear that individuals intuit or "see" *different* values. The "great" visions are not all compatible with one another in what they command, not to mention the visions which we do not call great. Which visions are the authentic ones? Prior to every conclusion that these are the objective values of all eternity, or even of all time and existence, is the assumption that *this* is the trustworthy seer. In a dispute between two men, one of whom asserts that the other is color-blind and the other that the first is "just seeing things," there are definite ways of determining who is right. In a dispute between two seers whose immediate intuitions report conflicting news about the nature and hierarchy of absolute values, there is no rational way of reaching a consensus. The true prophet cannot be distinguished from the false by invoking absolute values whose validity depends upon a prior assumption of the reliability of prophetic testimony. The complacency with which some writers have cut the Gordian knot by introducing reference to the intuitions of "the best people" or "the most cultured people" or "the saving remnant" is evidence either of parochialism or of snobbery.

The record of human error and cruelty shows what ghastly consequences often result from the conviction that one's moral insight cannot possibly be wrong and that it needs no further justification than its own incandescent purity. No more than a solipsist can make plausible on his own assumptions the existence of another solipsist, can an absolutist find a rightful place for another absolutist who disagrees with him. Absolutists face each other over an abyss which cannot be bridged even by their weapons of war.

### 3. DEMOCRACY AND PREFERENCES

The view that an acceptance of democracy is an expression of a preference does not carry us far until the kind of preference is indicated. A

preference may express a passing whim or a deep natural bent; it may be impulsive or reflective. Preferences are rooted in our natures. Their forms, occasions, and objects are supplied by education, i. e., broadly speaking, by social habits and intelligence. But either our natures can be changed or the educators re-educated. If neither is possible, then the fact of moral choice becomes unintelligible. If we can offer no justification of a preference excepts that it is ours, obviously no point of intellectual or moral issue is raised; nor, a fortiori, can any be settled by the trial of arms. If we offer a justification of a preference, it will take one of the generic forms already discussed or about to be discussed.

#### 4. DEMOCRACY AS A HYPOTHESIS

When democracy is taken strictly as a form of political government, its superiority over other forms of government can be established to the extent that it achieves more security, freedom, and co-operative diversity than any of its alternatives. If we test the workings of political democracy by Paul's scheme of virtues or by Nietzsche's, we may perhaps reach another conclusion. So long as there is no dispute about observable effects and so long as we raise no question about the moral ideals by which we evaluate these effects, we have clear sailing.

But, as has already been made plain, by democracy as a way of life we mean a way of organizing human relationships which embodies a certain complex of moral ideals. Can these ideals be treated as hypotheses? The conventional reply has always been that no moral principle can be regarded as a hypothesis, for we must already have certain knowledge of what is good before we can evaluate the consequences of acting upon it. If any position is question-begging, surely this seems to be!

Were this a symposium on value theory, I would devote all my time to developing the general theory of moral ideals as hypotheses. But here I can only barely indicate that the notion is not viciously circular. A moral ideal is a prescription to act in a certain situation or class of situations in determinate ways that will organize the human needs and wants involved so as to fulfil a set of *other* values which are *postulated* as binding in relation to the problem in hand. No more than in other cases of inquiry do we start with an empty head. The cluster of values we bring to the situation is the result of prior experience and reflection. They are not arbitrarily postulated. The consequences of acting upon the hypothesis may lead us to challenge a postulated or assumed value. This in turn can become the subject of a similar investigation. Terminal values are always related to specific contexts; there is no absolute terminal value which is either self-evident or beyond the necessity of justifying itself if its credentials are challenged. There is no vicious infinite regress involved if we take our

problems concretely and one at a time. Nor is the procedure narrowly circular. For if, in a long history of raising and solving moral problems, we postulate as a value in solving a later problem a value which had itself to be certified in an earlier problem, this would testify to the presence of a fruitful set of systematically related values in the structure of our moral behavior. New values would emerge, or be discovered, in the course of our attempt to act upon our ideals and from the necessity of mediating the conflict between the postulated values as they bear on concrete human needs in specific situations.

I should like, however, to make the general position take form out of the discussion of the theme before us. That theme is: Why should we treat individuals of unequal talents and endowments as persons who are equally entitled to relevant consideration and care? Short of a treatise I can state only the reasons, without amplification of the concrete needs of the social situation which democracy seeks to meet and the institutional practices by which it must meet them.

(a) This method of treating human beings is more successful than any other in evoking a maximum of creative, voluntary effort from all members of the community. Properly implemented it gives all persons a stake in the community and elicits a maximum of intelligent loyalty.

(b) It enlarges the scope of our experience by enabling us to acquire insight into the needs, drives, and aspirations of others. Learning to understand how life is organized by other centers of experience is both a challenge and discipline for our imagination. In aiding the growth of others, we aid our own growth.

(c) The willingness to understand another man's point of view without necessarily surrendering to it makes it more likely that different points of view may negotiate their differences and learn to live peacefully with one another. A democratic community cannot be free from strife in a world where inequalities will always exist, but its ethics when intelligently acted upon makes more likely the diminution of strife or its transference to socially harmless forms than is the case when its principle of equality is denied. The consequences are less toadying, less fear, and less duplicity in the equalitarian community than in the nonequalitarian society.

(d) In nurturing the capacities of each individual so that they may come to their greatest fulfilment, we can best share our existing stores of truth and beauty and uncover new dimensions in these realms. How can anyone dedicated to the values of science and art consistently oppose a policy which maximizes the possibility of the discovery and widest dispersion of scientific truths and artistic meanings?

(e) Regard for the potentialities of all individuals makes for less cruelty of man toward man especially where cruelty is the result of



blindness to, or ignorance of, others' needs. A community organized along democratic lines is guilty of cruelty only at those points where it has failed to live up to its own ideals. A totalitarian community is systematically insensitive to the personal needs not only of members of the outlawed scapegoat group but of the majority of its subjects who are excluded from policy-making discussions. At best, there is no way of determining these personal needs except by the interpretation of the dictator and his experts who operate with the dogma that they know the true interests of their subjects better than the subjects themselves. At worst, the dictator assumes not only that he speaks for his subjects but that in some mystic way he feels and thinks for them too. Despite the great limitations—limitations from the point of view of their own ideals—under which the nineteenth- and twentieth-century democracies of the Western world suffered, I think it is indisputable, on the evidence, that by and large their social life, in so far as this was the consequence of policy, displayed less cruelty than the social life of any other historical period.

(f) Reasonableness of conclusions, where attitudes and interests conflict, depends upon the degree of mutual consultation and free intellectual communication between the principals involved. The democratic way of life makes possible the widest forms of mutual consultation and communication. Conclusions reached by these processes have a quality that can never be found where conclusions are imposed by force or authority—even if they are our own. Let me illustrate what I mean by taking as an example the enterprise represented by this Association. Who among us, desirous as we may be of the possibility of philosophical agreement, would forgo the methods of public discussion, criticism, argument, and rejoinder for a philosophical consensus imposed by a Gestapo or a G.P.U. even if by a strange quirk of affairs it was *our* philosophic position that the goon squads of orthodoxy sought to make the way of salvation? Who among us, knowing that outside the threshold of our meeting there stood an individual of strange country, color, or faith, capable of making a contribution to our deliberations, would not open the door to him? These are not rhetorical questions framed to discover philosophical fifth columnists. They are designed to show that the procedures of critical discussion and discovery, which are pre-eminently exhibited in the work of a scientific community, take for granted that national, racial, or religious origins are irrelevant to the logic of the method by which reasonable conclusions are reached. Democracy as a way of life differs from its alternatives in that it makes possible the extension of these methods of reaching reasonable conclusions from the fields of professional science and philosophy to all areas of human experience in which genuine problems arise.

There are other grounds that may be offered in justification of de-

mocracy as the most adequate social philosophy for our times. Every one of them, like the foregoing, postulates implicitly or explicitly values or desiderata. But I repeat: these postulates are ultimate only for the problem in hand. They may require justification. When we undertake such justification, we have undertaken a new inquiry into a new problem.

There are two important consequences of approaching democracy in this way. The first is that we avoid the temptation, which is rapidly gaining vogue, of making democracy absolutely valid in and for itself. There are many today who write as if they believe that democracy should prevail even though the heavens fall, and who say in so many words that "to question the validity of democracy is to disbelieve in it" and that we can meet the blind fanatical faith of fascism only with a faith in democracy which is at least just as fanatical. This temptation, it seems to me, must be avoided because, by counterposing subrational dogma to subrational dogma, it prepares the ground for an acceptance of a might-makes-right morality. Second, those who make of democracy an absolute value, which requires no justification but its inherent rightness, tend to identify this absolute democracy with whatever particular democratic status quo exists. On the other hand, the natural tendency of those who cannot distinguish between social philosophies on the ground of their inherent rightness is to test a social philosophy by the social institutions in which it is embodied. They are, therefore, more attentive to the actual workings and effects of democracy, more historical minded, and less likely to gloss over existing imperfections.

To those who say that human beings will not fight wholeheartedly except for certainties, and emphatically not for a hypothesis which is only probable, the reply must be made that this empirical position is highly dubious. Men have fought and do fight vigorously for causes on the basis of preponderant evidence. Vigorous action, indeed, is only desirable when we have first decided what is intelligent action. And intelligent action does not result when we assume that our ideas or ideals simply cannot be wrong. That both intelligence and resoluteness are compatible is clear in fields as far apart as military science and medicine. Once it is decided that the chances of one action are relatively better than another, once it is decided that an operation gives a patient a better chance of surviving than no operation, wisdom demands that the best warranted alternative be pursued with all our heart and all our soul. Let us remember that when we fight for democracy we are not fighting for an ideal which has just been proposed as a merely possible valid ideal for our times; we already have considerable evidence in its behalf, the weight of which, unfortunately too often, is properly evaluated only when democracy is lost or imperiled.

ERNEST NAGEL

## Naturalism Reconsidered\*

... THE PAST quarter century has been for philosophy in many parts of the world a period of acute self-questioning, engendered in no small measure by developments in scientific and logical thought, and in part no doubt by fundamental changes in the social order. In any event, there has come about a general loss of confidence in the competence of philosophy to provide by way of a distinctive intellectual method a basic ground-plan of the cosmos, or for that matter to contribute to knowledge of any primary subject-matter except by becoming a specialized positive science and subjecting itself to the discipline of empirical inquiry. Although the abysses of human ignorance are undeniably profound, it has also become apparent that ignorance, like actual knowledge, is of many special and heterogeneous things; and we have come to think, like the fox and unlike the hedgehog of whom Mr. Isaiah Berlin has recently reminded us, that there are a great many things which are already known or remain to be discovered, but that there is no one "big" thing which, if known, would make everything else coherent and unlock the mystery of creation. In consequence, many of us have ceased to emulate the great system-builders in the history of philosophy. In partial imitation of the strategy of modern science, and in the hope of achieving responsibly held conclusions about matters concerning which we could acquire genuine competence, we have tended to become specialists in our professional activities. We have come to direct our best energies to the resolution of limited problems and puzzles that emerge in the analysis of scientific and ordinary discourse, in the evaluation of claims to knowledge, in the interpretation and validation of ethical and esthetic judgments, and in the assessment of types of human experience. I hope I shall not be regarded as offensive in stating my

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impression that the majority of the best minds among us have turned away from the conception of the philosopher as the spectator of all time and existence, and have concentrated on restricted but manageable questions, with almost deliberate unconcern for the bearing of their often minute investigations upon an inclusive view of nature and man.

Some of us, I know, are distressed by the widespread scepticism of the traditional claims for a *philosophia perennis*, and have dismissed as utterly trivial most if not all the products of various current forms of analytical philosophy. I do not share this distress, nor do I think the dismissal is uniformly perspicacious and warranted. For in my judgment, the scepticism which many deplore is well-founded. Even though a fair-sized portion of recent analytical literature seems inconsequential also to me, analytical philosophy in our own day is the continuation of a major philosophic tradition, and can count substantial feats of clarification among its assets. Concentration on limited and determinate problems has yielded valuable fruits, not least in the form of an increased and refreshing sensitivity to the demands of responsible discourse.

On the other hand, philosophers like other men conduct their lives within the framework of certain comprehensive if not always explicit assumptions about the world they inhabit. These assumptions color evaluations of major ideals and proposed policies. I also suspect that the directions taken by analyses of specific intellectual problems are frequently if subtly controlled by the expressed or tacit beliefs philosophers hold concerning the over-all nature of things, by their views on human destiny, and by their conceptions of the scope of human reason. But conversely, resolutions of special problems made plausible by recent philosophical analysis, as well as by the findings of various positive sciences, seem to me to support certain broad generalizations about the cosmos and to disconfirm others. It is clearly desirable that such basic intellectual commitments, which are at once the matrix and the outcome of inquiries into specific problems, be made as explicit as possible. A philosopher who is a reflective man by profession, certainly owes it to himself to articulate, if only occasionally, what sort of world he thinks he inhabits, and to make clear to himself where approximately lies the center of his convictions.

The discharge of the important obligation which is mine this evening, seems to me an appropriate occasion for stating as simply and as succinctly as I can the substance of those intellectual commitments I like to call "naturalism." The label itself is of no importance, but I use it partly because of its historical associations, and partly because it is a reminder that the doctrines for which it is a name are neither new nor untried. With Santayana, I prefer not to accept in philosophic debate what I do not believe when I am not arguing; and naturalism as I construe it merely

formulates what centuries of human experience have repeatedly confirmed. At any rate, naturalism seems to me a sound generalized account of the world encountered in practice and in critical reflection, and a just perspective upon the human scene. I wish to state briefly and hence with little supporting argument what I take to be its major tenets, and to defend it against some recent criticisms.

Claims to knowledge cannot ultimately be divorced from an evaluation of the intellectual methods used to support those claims. It is nevertheless unfortunate that in recent years naturalists in philosophy have so frequently permitted their allegiance to dependable method of inquiry to obscure their substantive views on things in general. For it is the inclusive intellectual image of nature and man which naturalism supplies that sets it off from other comprehensive philosophies. In my conception of it, at any rate, naturalism embraces a generalized account of the cosmic scheme and of man's place in it, as well as a logic of inquiry.

I hasten to add, however, that naturalism does not offer a theory of nature in the sense that Newtonian mechanics, for example, provides a theory of motion. Naturalism does not, like the latter, specify a set of substantive principles with the help of which the detailed course of concrete happenings can be explained or understood. Moreover, the principles affirmed by naturalism are not proposed as competitors or underpinnings for any of the special theories which the positive sciences assert. Nor, finally, does naturalism offer its general view of nature and man as the product of some special philosophical mode of knowing. The account of things proposed by naturalism is a distillation from knowledge acquired in the usual way in daily encounters with the world or in specialized scientific inquiry. Naturalism articulates features of the world which, because they have become so obvious, are rarely mentioned in discussions of special subject-matter, but which distinguish our actual world from other conceivable worlds. The major affirmations of naturalism are accordingly meager in content; but the principles affirmed are nevertheless effective guides in responsible criticism and evaluation.

Two theses seem to me central to naturalism as I conceive it. The first is the existential and causal primacy of organized matter in the executive order of nature. This is the assumption that the occurrence of events, qualities and processes, and the characteristic behaviors of various individuals, are contingent on the organization of spatio-temporally located bodies, whose internal structures and external relations determine and limit the appearance and disappearance of everything that happens. That this is so, is one of the best-tested conclusions of experience. We are frequently ignorant of the special conditions under which things come into being or pass away; but we have also found repeatedly that when we look closely,

we eventually ascertain at least the approximate and gross conditions under which events occur, and we discover that those conditions invariably consist of some more or less complex organization of material substances. Naturalism does not maintain that only what is material exists, since many things noted in experience, for example, modes of action, relations of meaning, dreams, joys, plans, aspirations, are not as such material bodies or organizations of material bodies. What naturalism does assert as a truth about nature is that though *forms* of behavior or *functions* of material systems are indefeasibly parts of nature, forms and functions are not themselves agents in their own realization or in the realization of anything else. In the conception of nature's processes which naturalism affirms, there is no place for the operation of disembodied forces, no place for an immaterial spirit directing the course of events, no place for the survival of personality after the corruption of the body which exhibits it.

The second major contention of naturalism is that the manifest plurality and variety of things, of their qualities and their functions, are an irreducible feature of the cosmos, not a deceptive appearance cloaking some more homogeneous "ultimate reality" or transempirical substance, and that the sequential orders in which events occur or the manifold relations of dependence in which things exist are *contingent* connections, not the embodiments of a fixed and unified pattern of logically necessary links. The existential primacy of organized matter does not make illusory either the relatively permanent or the comparatively transient characters and forms which special configurations of bodies may possess. In particular, although the continued existence of the human scene is precarious and is dependent on a balance of forces that doubtless will not endure indefinitely, and even though its distinctive traits are not pervasive throughout space, it is nonetheless as much a part of the "ultimate" furniture of the world, and is as genuine a sample of what "really" exists, as are atoms and stars. There undoubtedly occur integrated systems of bodies, such as biological organisms, which have the capacity because of their material organization to maintain themselves and the direction of their characteristic activities. But there is no positive evidence, and much negative evidence, for the supposition that all existential structures are teleological systems in this sense, or for the view that whatever occurs is a phase in a unitary, teleologically organized, and all-inclusive process or system. Modern physical cosmology does indeed supply some evidence for definite patterns of evolutionary development of stars, galactic systems and even of the entire physical universe; and it is quite possible that the stage of cosmic evolution reached at any given time causally limits the types of things which can occur during that period. On the other hand, the patterns

of change investigated in physical cosmogony are not patterns that are exhaustive of everything that happens; and nothing in these current physical speculations requires the conclusion that changes in one star or galaxy are related by inherent necessity to every action of biological organisms in some remote planet. Even admittedly teleological systems contain parts and processes which are causally irrelevant to some of the activities maintained by those systems; and the causal dependencies known to hold between the parts of any system, teleological or not, have never been successfully established as forms of logically necessary relations. In brief, if naturalism is true, irreducible variety and logical contingency are fundamental traits of the world we actually inhabit. The orders and connections of things are all accessible to rational inquiry; but these orders and connections are not all derivable by deductive methods from any set of premises that deductive reason can certify.

It is in this framework of general ideas that naturalism envisages the career and destiny of man. Naturalism views the emergence and the continuance of human society as dependent on physical and physiological conditions that have not always obtained, and that will not permanently endure. But it does not in consequence regard man and his works as intrusions into nature, any more than it construes as intrusions the presence of heavenly bodies or of terrestrial protozoa. The stars are no more foreign to the cosmos than are men, even if the conditions for the existence of both stars and men are realized only occasionally or only in a few regions. Indeed, the conception of human life as a war with nature, as a struggle with an implacable foe that has doomed man to extinction, is but an inverted theology, with a malicious Devil in the seat of Omnipotence. It is a conception that is immodest as well as anthropomorphic in the importance it imputes to man in the scheme of things.

On the other hand, the affirmation that nature is man's "home" as much as it is the "home" of anything else, and the denial that cosmic forces are *intent* on destroying the human scene, do not warrant the interpretation that every sector of nature is explicable in term of traits known to characterize only human individuals and human actions. Man undoubtedly possesses characteristics which are shared by everything that exists; but he also manifests traits and capacities that appear to be distinctive of him. Is anything gained by confusion when all forms of dependence between things, whether animate or inanimate, and all types of behaviors they display, are subsumed under distinctions that have an identifiable content only in reference to the human psyche? Measured by the illumination they bring, there is nothing to differentiate the thesis that human traits are nothing but the properties of bodies which can be formulated exclusively in the language of current physical theory, from

the view that every change and every mode of operation, in whatever sector of the cosmos it may be encountered, is simply an illustration of some category pertinent to the description of human behavior.

Indeed, even some professed naturalists sometimes appear to promote the confusion when they make a fetish of continuity. Naturalists usually stress the emergence of novel forms in physical and biological evolution, thereby emphasizing the fact that human traits are not identical with the traits from which they emerge. Nevertheless, some distinguished contemporary naturalists also insist, occasionally with overtones of anxiety, that there is a "continuity" between the typically human on the one hand, and the physical and biological on the other. But is man's foothold in the scheme of things really made more secure by showing that his distinctive traits are in some sense "continuous" with features pervasive in nature, and would man's place in nature be less secure if such continuity did not obtain? The actual evidence for a continuity of development is conclusive in some instances of human traits, however it may be in others. But I sometimes suspect that the cardinal importance philosophers assign to the alleged universality of such continuity is a lingering survival of that ancient conception, according to which things are intelligible only when seen as teleological systems producing definite ends, so that nature itself is properly understood only when construed as the habitat of human society. In any event, a naturalism that is not provincial in its outlook will not accept the intellectual incorporation of man into nature at the price of reading into all the processes of the cosmos the passions, the strivings, the defeats and the glories of human life, and then exhibiting man as the most adequate, because most representative, expression of nature's inherent constitution. No, a mature naturalism seeks to understand what man is, not in terms of a discovered or postulated continuity between what is distinctive of him and what is pervasive in all things. Without denying that even the most distinctive traits are dependent on things which are non-human, a mature naturalism attempts to assess man's nature in the light of *his* actions and achievements, *his* aspirations and capacities, *his* limitations and tragic failures, and *his* splendid works of ingenuity and imagination.

Human nature and history, in short, are *human* nature and history, not the history and nature of anything else, however much knowledge of other things contributes to a just appraisal of what man is. In particular, the adequacy of proposed ideals for human life must be judged, not in terms of their causes and origins, but in reference to how the pursuit and possible realization of ideals contribute to the organization and release of *human* energies. Men are animated by many springs of action, no one of which is intrinsically good or evil; and a moral ideal is the imagined



satisfaction of some complex of impulses, desires, and needs. When ideals are handled responsibly, they therefore function as hypotheses for achieving a balanced exercise of human powers. Moral ideals are not self-certifying, any more than are the theories of the physical sciences; and evidence drawn from experienced satisfactions is required to validate them, however difficult may be the process of sifting and weighing the available data. Moral problems arise from a conflict of specific impulses and interests. They cannot, however, be effectively resolved by invoking standards derived from the study of non-human nature, or of what is allegedly beyond nature. If moral problems can be resolved at all, they can be resolved only in the light of specific human capacities, historical circumstance and acquired skills, and the opportunities (revealed by an imagination disciplined by knowledge) for altering the physical and social environment and for redirecting habitual behaviors. Moreover, since human virtues are in part the products of the society in which human powers are matured, a naturalistic moral theory is at the same time a critique of civilization, that is, a critique of the institutions that channel human energies, so as to exhibit the possibilities and limitations of various forms and arrangements of society for bringing enduring satisfactions to individual human careers.

These are the central tenets of what I take to be philosophical naturalism. They are tenets which are supported by compelling empirical evidence, rather than dicta based on dogmatic preference. In my view of it, naturalism does not dismiss every other different conception of the scheme of things as logically impossible; and it does not rule out all alternatives to itself on a priori grounds. It is possible, I think, to conceive without logical inconsistency a world in which disembodied forces are dynamic agents, or in which whatever happens is a manifestation of an unfolding logical pattern. In such possible worlds it would be an error to be a naturalist. But philosophy is not identical with pure mathematics, and its ultimate concern is with the actual world, even though philosophy must take cognizance of the fact that the actual world contains creatures who can envisage possible worlds and who employ different logical procedures for deciding which hypothetical world is the actual one. It is partly for this reason that contemporary naturalists devote so much attention to methods of evaluating evidence. When naturalists give their allegiance to the method of intelligence commonly designated as the method of modern empirical science, they do so because that method appears to be the most assured way of achieving reliable knowledge.

As judged by that method, the evidence in my opinion is at present conclusive for the truth of naturalism, and it is tempting to suppose that no one familiar with the evidence can fail to acknowledge that philosophy.

Indeed, some commentators there are who assert that all philosophies are at bottom only expressions in different idioms of the same conceptions about the nature of things, so that the strife of philosophic systems is mainly a conflict over essentially linguistic matters. Yet many thinkers for whom I have a profound respect explicitly reject naturalism, and their espousal of contrary views seems to me incompatible with the irenic claim that we really are in agreement on fundamentals.

Although I do not have the time this evening to consider systematically the criticisms currently made of naturalism, I do wish to examine briefly two repeatedly voiced objections which, if valid, would in my opinion seriously jeopardize the integrity and adequacy of naturalism as a philosophy. Stated summarily, the first objection is that in relying exclusively on the logico-empirical method of modern science for establishing cognitive claims, naturalists are in effect stacking the cards in their own favor, since thereby all alternative philosophies are antecedently disqualified. It is maintained, for example, that naturalism rejects any hypothesis about trans-empirical causes or time-transcending spiritual substances as factors in the order of things, not because such hypotheses are actually shown to be false, but simply because the logic of proof adopted dismisses as irrelevant any evidence which might establish them.

This criticism does not seem to me to have merit: the logico-empirical method of evaluating cognitive claims to which naturalists subscribe does not eliminate by fiat any hypothesis about existence for which evidence can be procured, that is, evidence that in the last resort can be obtained through sensory or introspective observation. Thus, anyone who asserts a hypothesis postulating a trans-empirical ground for all existence, presumably seeks to understand in terms of that ground the actual occurrences in nature, and to account thereby for what actually happens as distinct from what is merely imagined to happen. There must therefore be some connection between the postulated character of the hypothetical trans-empirical ground, and the empirically observable traits in the world around us; for otherwise the hypothesis is otiose, and not relevant to the spatio-temporal processes of nature. This does not mean, as some critics of naturalism suppose the latter to maintain, that the hypothetical trans-empirical ground must be characterized exclusively in terms of the observable properties of the world, any more than that the sub-microscopic particles and processes which current physical theory postulates must be logical constructions out of the observable traits of macroscopic objects. But it does mean that unless the hypothesis implies, even if only by a circuitous route, some statements about empirical data, it is not adequate to the task for which it is proposed. If naturalists reject hypotheses about trans-empirical substances, they do not do so arbitrarily. They reject such

hypotheses either because their relevance to the going concerns of nature is not established, or because, though their relevance is not in question, the actual evidence does not support them.

Nor does naturalism dismiss as unimportant and without consideration experiences such as of the holy, of divine illumination, or of mystical ecstasy, experiences which are of the greatest moment in the lives of many men, and which are often taken to signify the presence and operation of some purely spiritual reality. Such experiences have dimensions of meaning for those who have undergone them, that are admittedly not on par with the import of more common experiences like those of physical hunger, general well-being, or feelings of remorse and guilt. Yet such experiences are nonetheless events among other events; and though they may be evidence for something, their sheer occurrence does not certify *what* they are evidence for, any more than the sheer occurrence of dreams, hopes, and delusions authenticates the actual existence of their ostensible objects. In particular, whether the experience labelled as an experience of divine illumination is evidence for the existence of a divinity, is a question to be settled by inquiry, not by dogmatic affirmations or denials. When naturalists refuse to acknowledge, merely on the strength of such experiences, the operation or presence of a divine power, they do so not because their commitment to a logical method prevents them from treating it seriously, but because independent inquiry fails to confirm it. Knowledge is knowledge, and cannot without confusion be identified with intuitive insight or with the vivid immediacy of profoundly moving experiences. Claims to knowledge must be capable of being tested; and the testing must be conducted by eventual reference to such evidence as counts in the responsible conduct of everyday affairs as well as of systematic inquiry in the sciences. Naturalists are therefore not engaged in question-begging when, through the use of the logic of scientific intelligence, they judge non-naturalistic accounts of the order of things to be unfounded.

There is, however, a further objection to naturalism, to the effect that in committing itself to the logic of scientific proof, it is quite analogous to religious belief in resting on unsupported and indemonstrable faith. For that logic allegedly involves assumptions like the uniformity of nature or similar principles which transcend experience, cannot be justified empirically, and yet provide the premises that constitute the ultimate warrant for the conclusions of empirical inquiry. But if naturalism is thus based on unprovable articles of faith, on what cogent grounds can it reject a different conception of the true order of governance of events which rests on a different faith?

I cannot here deal adequately with the complex issues raised by this

objection. Its point is not satisfactorily turned by claiming, as some have done, that instead of being articles of faith, the alleged indemonstrable postulates of scientific method are simply rules of the scientific game which *define* what in that game is to be understood by the words "knowledge" and "evidence." As I see it, however, the objection has force only for those whose ideal of reason is demonstration, and who therefore refuse to dignify anything as genuine knowledge unless it is demonstrable from self-luminous and self-evident premises. But if, as I also think, that ideal is not universally appropriate, and if, furthermore, a *wholesale* justification for knowledge and its methods is an unreasonable demand and a misplaced effort, the objection appears as quite pointless. The warrant for a proposition about some specific inter-relations of events does not derive from a faith in the uniformity of nature or in other principles with a cosmic scope. The warrant derives exclusively from the specific evidence available for that proposition, and from the contingent historical fact that the special ways employed in obtaining and appraising the evidence have been generally effective in yielding reliable knowledge. Subsequent inquiry may show that we were mistaken in accepting a proposition on the evidence available earlier; and further inquiry may also reveal that a given inductive policy, despite a record of successful past performance, requires correction if not total rejection. Fortunately, however, we are not always mistaken in accepting various propositions or in employing certain inductive policies, even though we are unable to demonstrate that we shall never fall into error. Accordingly, though many of our hopes for the stability of beliefs in the face of fresh experience may turn out to be baseless, and though no guarantees can be given that our most assured claims to knowledge may not eventually need revision, in adopting scientific method as the instrument for evaluating claims to knowledge, naturalists are not subscribing to an indemonstrable faith.

The bitter years of cataclysmic wars and social upheavals through which our generation has been passing have also witnessed a general decline of earlier hopes in the possibilities of modern science for achieving a liberal and humane civilization. Indeed, as is well known, many men have become convinced that the progress and spread of science, and the consequent secularization of society, are the prime sources of our present ills; and a not inconsiderable number of thinkers have made widely popular various revived forms of older religious and irrationalistic philosophies as guides to human salvation. Moreover, since naturalists have not abandoned their firm adherence to the method of scientific intelligence, naturalism has been repeatedly charged with insensitivity toward spiritual values, with a shallow optimism toward science as an instrument for ennobling the human estate, and with a philistine blindness toward the

ineradicable miseries of human existence. I want to conclude with a few brief comments on these allegations.

It is almost painful to have to make a point of the elementary fact that whatever may happen to be the range of special interests and sensibilities of individual naturalists, there is no incompatibility, whether logical or psychological, between maintaining that warranted knowledge is secured only through the use of a definite logical method, and recognizing that the world can be experienced in many other ways than by knowing it. It is a matter of record that outstanding exponents of naturalism, in our own time as well as in the past, have exhibited an unequalled and tender sensitivity to the esthetic and moral dimensions of human experience; and they have been not only movingly eloquent celebrants of the role of moral idealism and of intellectual and esthetic contemplation in human life, but also vigorous defenders of the distinctive character of these values against facile attempts to reduce them to something else.

It seems to me singularly inept, moreover, to indict naturalism as a philosophy without a sense for the tragic aspects of life. For unlike many world-views, naturalism offers no cosmic consolation for the unmerited defeats and undeserved sufferings which all men experience in one form or another. It has never sought to conceal its view of human destiny as an episode between two oblivions. To be sure, naturalism is not a philosophy of despair. For one facet in its radical pluralism is the truth that a human good is nonetheless a good, despite its transitory existence. There doubtless are foolish optimists among those professing naturalism, though naturalism has no monopoly in this respect, and it is from other quarters that one usually receives glad tidings of a universal nostrum. But in any event, neither the pluralism so central to naturalism, nor its cultivation of scientific reason, is compatible with any dogmatic assumption to the effect that men can be liberated from *all* the sorrows and evils to which they are now heirs, through the eventual advances of science and the institution of appropriate physical and social innovations. Indeed, why suppose that a philosophy which is wedded to the use of the sober logic of scientific intelligence, should thereby be committed to the dogma that there are no irremediable evils? On the contrary, human reason is potent only against evils that are *remediable*. At the same time, since it is impossible to decide responsibly, *antecedent* to inquiry, *which* of the many human ills can be mitigated if not eradicated by extending the operations of scientific reason into human affairs, naturalism is not a philosophy of *general* renunciation, even though it recognizes that it is the better part of wisdom to be equably resigned to what, in the light of available evidence, cannot be avoided. Human reason is not an omnipotent instrument for the achievement of human goods; but it is the only instrument we do

possess, and it is not a contemptible one. Although naturalism is acutely sensitive to the actual limitations of rational effort, those limitations do not warrant a romantic philosophy of general despair, and they do not blind naturalism to the possibilities implicit in the exercise of disciplined reason for realizing human excellence.

# *The Pragmatist Approach*

PRAGMATISM is a distinctively American philosophical position. It would not be incorrect to say that Pragmatism is an intellectualized expression of the American genius for solving problems. The word *pragmatism* comes from a Greek root which means an act, or deed. This derivation does much to express the spirit of the Pragmatist outlook. Just as Socrates is said to have brought philosophy down from the clouds to the market place, so Pragmatism may be said to have brought it out of the ivy-covered institutions and into the factory, the office, the studio, and the home.

Pragmatism has been greatly misunderstood. Contrary to the popular understanding of the Pragmatist undertaking, the emphasis is not on results but on method. In the Pragmatist analysis, for example, science is seen to be essentially a method of inquiry, morality a method of blending impulse with reason, and even art and religion are conceived by the Pragmatist as ways of integrating and bringing to fruition potentialities of human value. Pragmatism, although always concerned with human action, approaches action in terms not of what we do but of how we do it. The Pragmatist philosophy itself, as the following selections will bear out, cannot be characterized by a specific body of philosophic doctrine, but rather by a characteristic way of doing philosophy.

## *SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING*

DEWEY, JOHN. *Experience and Nature*

DEWEY, JOHN. *The Quest for Certainty*

- DEWEY, JOHN. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*  
HOCKING, WILLIAM E. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*  
JAMES, WILLIAM. *Essays in Pragmatism*  
JAMES, WILLIAM. *Pragmatism*  
JAMES, WILLIAM. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*  
JOACHIM, H. H. *The Nature of Truth*  
LOVEJOY, ARTHUR O. *The Revolt against Dualism*  
PEIRCE, CHARLES S. *Collected Papers*, vol. I  
PRATT, JAMES B. *What Is Pragmatism?*  
ROYCE, JOSIAH. *William James and Other Essays*  
SCHILLER, F. C. S. *Riddles of the Sphinx*



CHARLES S. PEIRCE

## The Fixation of Belief\*

FEW PERSONS care to study logic, because everybody conceives himself to be proficient enough in the art of reasoning already. But I observe that this satisfaction is limited to one's own ratiocination, and does not extend to that of other men.

We come to the full possession of our power of drawing inferences the last of all our faculties, for it is not so much a natural gift as a long and difficult art. The history of its practice would make a grand subject for a book. The medieval schoolmen, following the Romans, made logic the earliest of a boy's studies after grammar, as being very easy. So it was as they understood it. Its fundamental principle, according to them, was, that all knowledge rests on either authority or reason; but that whatever is deduced by reason depends ultimately on a premise derived from authority. Accordingly, as soon as a boy was perfect in the syllogistic procedure, his intellectual kit of tools was held to be complete.

To Roger Bacon, that remarkable mind who in the middle of the thirteenth century was almost a scientific man, the schoolmen's conception of reasoning appeared only an obstacle to truth. He saw that experience alone teaches anything—a proposition which to us seems easy to understand, because a distinct conception of experience has been handed down to us from former generations; which to him also seemed perfectly clear, because its difficulties had not yet unfolded themselves. Of all kinds of experience, the best, he thought, was interior illumination, which teaches many things about Nature which the external senses could never discover, such as the transubstantiation of bread.

Four centuries later, the more celebrated Bacon, in the first book of his "Novum Organum," gave his clear account of experience as something which must be opened to verification and reexamination. But, superior as

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Lord Bacon's conception is to earlier notions, a modern reader who is not in awe of his grandiloquence is chiefly struck by the inadequacy of his view of scientific procedure. That we have only to make some crude experiments, to draw up briefs of the results in certain blank forms, to go through these by rule, checking off everything disproved and setting down the alternatives, and that thus in a few years physical science would be finished up—what an idea! "He wrote on science like a Lord Chancellor," indeed.

The early scientists, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Galileo and Gilbert, had methods more like those of their modern brethren. Kepler undertook to draw a curve through the places of Mars; and his greatest service to science was in impressing on men's minds that this was the thing to be done if they wished to improve astronomy; that they were not to content themselves with inquiring whether one system of epicycles was better than another but that they were to sit down by the figures and find out what the curve, in truth, was. He accomplished this by his incomparable energy and courage, blundering along in the most inconceivable way (to us), from one irrational hypothesis to another, until, after trying twenty-two of these, he fell, by the mere exhaustion of his invention, upon the orbit which a mind well furnished with the weapons of modern logic would have tried almost at the outset.

In the same way, every work of science great enough to be remembered for a few generations affords some exemplification of the defective state of the art of reasoning of the time when it was written; and each chief step in science has been a lesson in logic. It was so when Lavoisier and his contemporaries took up the study of Chemistry. The old chemist's maxim had been, "*Lege, lege, lege, labora, ora, et relege.*" Lavoisier's method was not to read and pray, not to dream that some long and complicated chemical process would have a certain effect, to put it into practice with dull patience, after its inevitable failure to dream that with some modification it would have another result, and to end by publishing the last dream as a fact: his way was to carry his mind into his laboratory, and to make of his alembics and cucurbits instruments of thought, giving a new conception of reasoning as something which was to be done with one's eyes open, by manipulating real things instead of words and fancies.

## II

The object of reasoning is to find out, from the consideration of what we already know, something else which we do not know. Consequently, reasoning is good if it be such as to give a true conclusion from true premises, and not otherwise. Thus, the question of validity is purely one of fact and not of thinking. A being the premises and B being the conclu-

sion, the question is, whether these facts are really so related that if A is, B is. If so, the inference is valid; if not, not. It is not in the least the question whether, when the premises are accepted by the mind, we feel an impulse to accept the conclusion also. It is true that we do generally reason correctly by nature. But that is an accident; the true conclusion would remain true if we had no impulse to accept it; and the false one would remain false, though we could not resist the tendency to believe in it.

We are, doubtless, in the main logical animals, but we are not perfectly so. Most of us, for example, are naturally more sanguine and hopeful than logic would justify. We seem to be so constituted that in the absence of any facts to go upon we are happy and self-satisfied; so that the effect of experience is continually to counteract our hopes and aspirations. Yet a lifetime of the application of this corrective does not usually eradicate our sanguine disposition. Where hope is unchecked by any experience, it is likely that our optimism is extravagant. Logicality in regard to practical matters is the most useful quality an animal can possess, and might, therefore, result from the action of natural selection; but outside of these it is probably of more advantage to the animal to have his mind filled with pleasing and encouraging visions, independently of their truth; and thus, upon unpractical subjects, natural selection might occasion a fallacious tendency of thought.

That which determines us, from given premises, to draw one inference rather than another, is some habit of mind, whether it be constitutional or acquired. The habit is good or otherwise, according as it produces true conclusions from true premises or not; and an inference is regarded as valid or not, without reference to the truth or falsity of its conclusion specially, but according as the habit which determines it is such as to produce true conclusions in general or not. The particular habit of mind which governs this or that inference may be formulated in a proposition whose truth depends on the validity of the inferences which the habit determines; and such a formula is called a *guiding principle* of inference. Suppose, for example, that we observe that a rotating disk of copper quickly comes to rest when placed between the poles of a magnet, and we infer that this will happen with every disk of copper. The guiding principle is, that what is true of one piece of copper is true of another. Such a guiding principle with regard to copper would be much safer than with regard to many other substances—brass, for example.

A book might be written to signalize all the most important of these guiding principles of reasoning. It would probably be, we must confess, of no service to a person whose thought is directed wholly to practical subjects, and whose activity moves along thoroughly beaten paths. The problems which present themselves to such a mind are matters of routine

which he has learned once for all to handle in learning his business. But let a man venture into an unfamiliar field, or where his results are not continually checked by experience, and all history shows that the most masculine intellect will oftentimes lose his orientation and waste his efforts in directions which bring him no nearer to his goal, or even carry him entirely astray. He is like a ship on the open sea, with no one on board who understands the rules of navigation. And in such a case some general study of the guiding principles of reasoning would be sure to be found useful.

The subject could hardly be treated, however, without being first limited; since almost any fact may serve as a guiding principle. But it so happens that there exists a division among facts, such that in one class are all those which are absolutely essential as guiding principles, while in the other are all those which have any other interest as objects of research. This division is between those which are necessarily taken for granted in asking whether a certain conclusion follows from certain premises, and those which are not implied in that question. A moment's thought will show that a variety of facts are already assumed when the logical question is first asked. It is implied, for instance, that there are such states of mind as doubt and belief—that a passage from one to the other is possible, the object of thought remaining the same, and that this transition is subject to some rules which all minds are alike bound by. As these are facts which we must already know before we can have any clear conception of reasoning at all, it cannot be supposed to be any longer of much interest to inquire into their truth or falsity. On the other hand, it is easy to believe that those rules of reasoning which are deduced from the very idea of the process are the ones which are the most essential; and, indeed, that so long as it conforms to these it will, at least, not lead to false conclusions from true premises. In point of fact, the importance of what may be deduced from the assumptions involved in the logical question turns out to be greater than might be supposed, and this for reasons which it is difficult to exhibit at the outset. The only one which I shall here mention is, that conceptions which are really products of logical reflections, without being readily seen to be so, mingle with our ordinary thoughts, and are frequently the causes of great confusion. This is the case, for example, with the conception of quality. A quality as such is never an object of observation. We can see that a thing is blue or green, but the quality of being blue and the quality of being green are not things which we see; they are products of logical reflections. The truth is, that common-sense, or thought as it first emerges above the level of the narrowly practical, is deeply imbued with that bad logical quality to which the epithet *metaphysical* is commonly applied; and nothing can clear it up but a severe course of logic.

## III

We generally know when we wish to ask a question and when we wish to pronounce a judgment, for there is a dissimilarity between the sensation of doubting and that of believing.

But this is not all which distinguishes doubt from belief. There is a practical difference. Our beliefs guide our desires and shape our actions. The Assassins, or followers of the Old Man of the Mountain, used to rush into death at his least command, because they believed that obedience to him would insure everlasting felicity. Had they doubted this, they would not have acted as they did. So it is with every belief, according to its degree. The feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions. Doubt never has such an effect.

Nor must we overlook a third point of difference. Doubt is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else. On the contrary, we cling tenaciously, not merely to believing, but to believing just what we do believe.

Thus, both doubt and belief have positive effects upon us, though very different ones. Belief does not make us act at once, but puts us into such a condition that we shall behave in a certain way, when the occasion arises. Doubt has not the least effect of this sort, but stimulates us to action until it is destroyed. This reminds us of the irritation of a nerve and the reflex action produced thereby; while for the analogue of belief, in the nervous system, we must look to what are called nervous associations—for example, to that habit of the nerves in consequence of which the smell of a peach will make the mouth water.

The irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief. I shall term this struggle *inquiry*, though it must be admitted that this is sometimes not a very apt designation.

## IV

The irritation of doubt is the only immediate motive for the struggle to attain belief. It is certainly best for us that our beliefs should be such as may truly guide our actions so as to satisfy our desires; and this reflection will make us reject any belief which does not seem to have been so formed as to insure this result. But it will only do so by creating a doubt in the place of that belief. With the doubt, therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends. Hence, the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion. We may fancy that this is not enough for us, and

that we seek not merely an opinion, but a true opinion. But put this fancy to the test, and it proves groundless; for as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be false or true. And it is clear that nothing out of the sphere of our knowledge can be our object, for nothing which does not affect the mind can be a motive for a mental effort. The most that can be maintained is, that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true. But we think each one of our beliefs to be true, and, indeed, it is mere tautology to say so.

That the settlement of opinion is the sole end of inquiry is a very important proposition. It sweeps away, at once, various vague and erroneous conceptions of proof. A few of these may be noticed here.

1. Some philosophers have imagined that to start an inquiry it was only necessary to utter a question or set it down on paper, and have even recommended us to begin our studies with questioning everything! But the mere putting of a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle after belief. There must be a real and living doubt, and without this all discussion is idle.

2. It is a very common idea that a demonstration must rest on some ultimate and absolutely indubitable propositions. These, according to one school, are first principles of a general nature; according to another, are first sensations. But, in point of fact, an inquiry, to have that completely satisfactory result called demonstration, has only to start with propositions perfectly free from all actual doubt. If the premises are not in fact doubted at all, they cannot be more satisfactory than they are.

3. Some people seem to love to argue a point after all the world is fully convinced of it. But no further advance can be made. When doubt ceases, mental action on the subject comes to an end; and, if it did go on, it would be without a purpose.

## V

If the settlement of opinion is the sole object of inquiry, and if belief is of the nature of a habit, why should we not attain the desired end, by taking any answer to a question, which we may fancy, and constantly reiterating it to ourselves, dwelling on all which may conduce to that belief, and learning to turn with contempt and hatred from anything which might disturb it? This simple and direct method is really pursued by many men. I remember once being entreated not to read a certain newspaper lest it might change my opinion upon free-trade. "Lest I might be entrapped by its fallacies and misstatements," was the form of expression. "You are not," my friend said, "a special student of political economy. You might,

therefore, easily be deceived by fallacious arguments upon the subject. You might, then, if you read this paper, be led to believe in protection. But you admit that free-trade is the true doctrine; and you do not wish to believe what is not true." I have often known this system to be deliberately adopted. Still oftener, the instinctive dislike of an undecided state of mind, exaggerated into a vague dread of doubt, makes men cling spasmodically to the views they already take. The man feels that, if he only holds to his belief without wavering, it will be entirely satisfactory. Nor can it be denied that a steady and immovable faith yields great peace of mind. It may, indeed, give rise to inconveniences, as if a man should resolutely continue to believe that fire would not burn him, or that he would be eternally damned if he received his *ingesta* otherwise than through a stomach-pump. But then the man who adopts this method will not allow that its inconveniences are greater than its advantages. He will say, "I hold steadfastly to the truth and the truth is always wholesome." And in many cases it may very well be that the pleasure he derives from his calm faith overbalances any inconveniences resulting from its deceptive character. Thus, if it be true that death is annihilation, then the man who believes that he will certainly go straight to heaven when he dies, provided he have fulfilled certain simple observances in this life, has a cheap pleasure which will not be followed by the least disappointment. A similar consideration seems to have weight with many persons in religious topics, for we frequently hear it said, "Oh, I could not believe so-and-so, because I should be wretched if I did." When an ostrich buries its head in the sand as danger approaches, it very likely takes the happiest course. It hides the danger, and then calmly says there is no danger; and if it feels perfectly sure there is none, why should it raise its head to see? A man may go through life, systematically keeping out of view all that might cause a change in his opinions, and if he only succeeds—basing his method, as he does, on two fundamental psychological laws—I do not see what can be said against his doing so. It would be an egotistical impertinence to object that his procedure is irrational, for that only amounts to saying that his method of settling belief is not ours. He does not propose to himself to be rational, and indeed, will often talk with scorn of man's weak and illusive reason. So let him think as he pleases.

But this method of fixing belief, which may be called the method of tenacity, will be unable to hold its ground in practice. The social impulse is against it. The man who adopts it will find that other men think differently from him, and it will be apt to occur to him in some saner moment that their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief. This conception, that another man's thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one's own, is a distinctly new step, and a

highly important one. It arises from an impulse too strong in man to be suppressed, without danger of destroying the human species. Unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other's opinions; so that the problem becomes how to fix belief, not in the individual merely, but in the community.

Let the will of the state act, then, instead of that of the individual. Let an institution be created which shall have for its object to keep correct doctrines before the attention of the people, to reiterate them perpetually, and to teach them to the young; having at the same time power to prevent contrary doctrines from being taught, advocated, or expressed. Let all possible causes of a change of mind be removed from men's apprehensions. Let them be kept ignorant, lest they should learn of some reason to think otherwise than they do. Let their passions be enlisted, so that they may regard private and unusual opinions with hatred and horror. Then, let all men who reject the established belief be terrified into silence. Let the people turn out and tar-and-feather such men, or let inquisitions be made into the manner of thinking of suspected persons, and, when they are found guilty of forbidden beliefs, let them be subjected to some signal punishment. When complete agreement could not otherwise be reached, a general massacre of all who have not thought in a certain way has proved a very effective means of settling opinion in a country. If the power to do this be wanting, let a list of opinions be drawn up, to which no man of the least independence of thought can assent, and let the faithful be required to accept all these propositions, in order to segregate them as radically as possible from the influence of the rest of the world.

This method has, from the earliest times, been one of the chief means of upholding correct theological and political doctrines, and of preserving their universal or catholic character. In Rome, especially, it has been practised from the days of Numa Pompilius to those of Pius Nonus. This is the most perfect example in history; but wherever there is a priesthood—and no religion has been without one—this method has been more or less made use of. Wherever there is an aristocracy, or a guild, or any association of a class of men whose interests depend, or are supposed to depend, on certain propositions, there will be inevitably found some traces of this natural product of social feeling. Cruelties always accompany this system; and when it is consistently carried out, they become atrocities of the most horrible kind in the eyes of any rational man. Nor should this occasion surprise, for the officer of a society does not feel justified in surrendering the interests of that society for the sake of mercy, as he might his own private interests. It is natural, therefore, that sympathy and fellowship should thus produce a most ruthless power.



In judging this method of fixing belief, which may be called the method of authority, we must, in the first place, allow its immeasurable mental and moral superiority to the method of tenacity. Its success is proportionately greater; and, in fact, it has over and over again worked the most majestic results. The mere structures of stone which it has caused to be put together—in Siam, for example, in Egypt, and in Europe—have many of them a sublimity hardly more than rivalled by the greatest works of Nature. And, except the geological epochs, there are no periods of time so vast as those which are measured by some of these organized faiths. If we scrutinize the matter closely, we shall find that there has not been one of their creeds which has remained always the same; yet the change is so slow as to be imperceptible during one person's life, so that individual belief remains sensibly fixed. For the mass of mankind, then, there is perhaps no better method than this. If it is their highest impulse to be intellectual slaves, then slaves they ought to remain.

But no institution can undertake to regulate opinions upon every subject. Only the most important ones can be attended to, and on the rest men's minds must be left to the action of natural causes. This imperfection will be no source of weakness so long as men are in such a state of culture that one opinion does not influence another—that is, so long as they cannot put two and two together. But in the most priest-ridden states some individuals will be found who are raised above that condition. These men possess a wider sort of social feeling; they see that men in other countries and in other ages held to very different doctrines from those which they themselves have been brought up to believe; and they cannot help seeing that it is the mere accident of their having been taught as they have, and of their having been surrounded with the manners and associations they have, that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently. Nor can their candour resist the reflection that there is no reason to rate their own views at a higher value than those of other nations and other centuries; thus giving rise to doubts in their minds.

They will further perceive that such doubts as these must exist in their minds with reference to every belief which seems to be determined by the caprice either of themselves or of those who originated the popular opinions. The willful adherence to a belief, and the arbitrary forcing of it upon others, must, therefore, both be given up. A different new method of settling opinions must be adopted, that shall not only produce an impulse to believe, but shall also decide what proposition it is which is to be believed. Let the action of natural preferences be unimpeded, then, and under their influence let men, conversing together and regarding matters in different lights, gradually develop beliefs in harmony with natural causes. This method resembles that by which conceptions of art have

been brought to maturity. The most perfect example of it is to be found in the history of metaphysical philosophy. Systems of this sort have not usually rested upon any observed facts, at least not in any great degree. They have been chiefly adopted because their fundamental propositions seemed "agreeable to reason." This is an apt expression; it does not mean that which agrees with experience, but that which we find ourselves inclined to believe. Plato, for example, finds it agreeable to reason that the distances of the celestial spheres from one another should be proportional to the different lengths of strings which produce harmonious chords. Many philosophers have been led to their main conclusions by considerations like this; but this is the lowest and least developed form which the method takes, for it is clear that another man might find Kepler's theory, that the celestial spheres are proportional to the inscribed and circumscribed spheres of the different regular solids, more agreeable to *his* reason. But the shock of opinions will soon lead men to rest on preferences of a far more universal nature. Take, for example, the doctrine that man only acts selfishly—that is, from the consideration that acting in one way will afford him more pleasure than acting in another. This rests on no fact in the world, but it has had a wide acceptance as being the only reasonable theory.

This method is far more intellectual and respectable from the point of view of reason than either of the others which we have noticed. But its failure has been the most manifest. It makes of inquiry something similar to the development of taste; but taste, unfortunately, is always more or less a matter of fashion, and accordingly metaphysicians have never come to any fixed agreement, but the pendulum has swung backward and forward between a more material and a more spiritual philosophy, from the earliest times to the latest. And so from this, which has been called the *a priori* method, we are driven, in Lord Bacon's phrase, to a true induction. We have examined into this *a priori* method as something which promised to deliver our opinions from their accidental and capricious element. But development, while it is a process which eliminates the effect of some casual circumstances, only magnifies that of others. This method, therefore, does not differ in a very essential way from that of authority. The government may not have lifted its finger to influence my convictions; I may have been left outwardly quite free to choose, we will say, between monogamy and polygamy, and, appealing to my conscience only, I may have concluded that the latter practice is in itself licentious. But when I come to see that the chief obstacle to the spread of Christianity among a people of as high culture as the Hindoos has been a conviction of the immorality of our way of treating women, I cannot help seeing that, though governments do not interfere, sentiments in their development will be very

greatly determined by accidental causes. Now, there are some people, among whom I must suppose that my reader is to be found, who, when they see that any belief of theirs is determined by any circumstance extraneous to the facts, will from that moment not merely admit in words that that belief is doubtful, but will experience a real doubt of it, so that it ceases in some degree to be a belief.

To satisfy our doubts, therefore, it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be caused by nothing human, but by some external permanency—by something upon which our thinking has no effects. Some mystics imagine that they have such a method in a private inspiration from on high. But that is only a form of the method of tenacity, in which the conception of truth as something public is not yet developed. Our external permanency would not be external, in our sense, if it was restricted in this influence to one individual. It must be something which affects, or might affect, every man. And, though these affections are necessarily as various as are individual conditions, yet the method must be such that the ultimate conclusion of every man shall be the same. Such is the method of science. Its fundamental hypothesis, restated in more familiar language, is this: There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those realities affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and he reason enough about it, will be led to the one True conclusion. The new conception here involved is that of Reality. It may be asked how I know that there are any realities. If this hypothesis is the sole support of my method of inquiry, my method of inquiry must not be used to support my hypothesis. The reply is this:

1. If investigation cannot be regarded as proving that there are Real things, it at least does not lead to a contrary conclusion; but the method and the conception on which it is based remain ever in harmony. No doubts of the method, therefore, necessarily arise from its practice, as is the case with all the others.

2. The feeling which gives rise to any method of fixing belief is a dissatisfaction at two repugnant propositions. But here already is a vague concession that there is some *one* thing to which a proposition should conform. Nobody, therefore, can really doubt that there are realities, for, if he did, doubt would not be a source of dissatisfaction. The hypothesis, therefore, is one which every mind admits. So that the social impulse does not cause men to doubt it.

3. Everybody uses the scientific method about a great many things, and only ceases to use it when he does not know how to apply it.

4. Experience of the method has not led us to doubt it, but, on the contrary, scientific investigation has had the most wonderful triumphs in the way of settling opinion. These afford the explanation of my not doubting the method or the hypothesis which it supposes; and not having any doubt, not believing that anybody else whom I could influence has, it would be the merest babble for me to say more about it. . . .

This is the only one of the four methods which presents any distinction of a right and a wrong way. If I adopt the method of tenacity, and shut myself out from all influences, whatever I think necessary to doing this, is necessary according to that method. So with the method of authority: the state may try to put down heresy by means which, from a scientific point of view, seem very ill-calculated to accomplish its purposes; but the only test *on that method* is what the state thinks; so that it cannot pursue the method wrongly. So with the *a priori* method. The very essence of it is to think as one is inclined to think. All metaphysicians will be sure to do that, however they may be inclined to judge each other to be perversely wrong. The Hegelian system recognizes every natural tendency of thought as logical, although it is certain to be abolished by counter-tendencies. Hegel thinks there is a regular system in the succession of these tendencies, in consequence of which, after drifting one way and the other for a long time, opinion will at last go right. And it is true that metaphysicians get the right ideas at last; Hegel's system of Nature represents tolerably the science of that day; and one may be sure that whatever scientific investigation has put out of doubt will presently receive *a priori* demonstration on the part of the metaphysicians. But with the scientific method the case is different. I may start with known and observed facts to proceed to the unknown; and yet the rules which I follow in doing so may not be such as investigation would approve. The test of whether I am truly following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but, on the contrary, itself involves the application of the method. Hence it is that bad reasoning as well as good reasoning is possible; and this fact is the foundation of the practical side of logic.

It is not to be supposed that the first three methods of settling opinion present no advantage whatever over the scientific method. On the contrary, each has some peculiar convenience of its own. The *a priori* method is distinguished for its comfortable conclusions. It is the nature of the process to adopt whatever belief we are inclined to, and there are certain flatteries to the vanity of man which we all believe by nature, until we are awakened from our pleasing dream by rough facts. The method of

authority will always govern the mass of mankind; and those who wield the various forms of organized force in the state will never be convinced that dangerous reasoning ought not to be suppressed in some way. If liberty of speech is to be untrammelled from the grosser forms of constraint, then uniformity of opinion will be secured by a moral terrorism to which the respectability of society will give its thorough approval. Following the method of authority is the path of peace. Certain non-conformities are permitted; certain others (considered unsafe) are forbidden. These are different in different countries and in different ages; but, wherever you are, let it be known that you seriously hold a tabooed belief, and you may be perfectly sure of being treated with a cruelty less brutal but more refined than hunting you like a wolf. Thus, the greatest intellectual benefactors of mankind have never dared, and dare not now, to utter the whole of their thought; and thus a shade of *prima facie* doubt is cast upon every proposition which is considered essential to the security of society. Singularly enough, the persecution does not all come from without; but a man torments himself and is oftentimes most distressed at finding himself believing propositions which he has been brought up to regard with aversion. The peaceful and sympathetic man will, therefore, find it hard to resist the temptation to submit his opinions to authority. But most of all I admire the method of tenacity for its strength, simplicity, and directness. Men who pursue it are distinguished for their decision of character, which becomes very easy with such a mental rule. They do not waste time in trying to make up their minds what they want, but, fastening like lightning upon whatever alternative comes first, they hold it to the end, whatever happens, without an instant's irresolution. This is one of the splendid qualities which generally accompany brilliant, unlasting success. It is impossible not to envy the man who can dismiss reason, although we know how it must turn out at last.

Such are the advantages which the other methods of settling opinion have over scientific investigation. A man should consider well of them; and then he should consider that, after all, he wishes his opinions to coincide with the fact, and that there is no reason why the results of those three methods should do so. To bring about this effect is the prerogative of the method of science. Upon such considerations he has to make his choice—a choice which is far more than the adoption of any intellectual opinion, which is one of the ruling decisions of his life, to which, when once made, he is bound to adhere. The force of habit will sometimes cause a man to hold on to old beliefs, after he is in a condition to see that they have no sound basis. But reflection upon the state of the case will overcome these habits, and he ought to allow reflection its full weight. People sometimes shrink from doing this, having an idea that beliefs are

wholesome which they cannot help feeling rest on nothing. But let such persons suppose an analogous though different case from their own. Let them ask themselves what they would say to a reformed Mussulman who should hesitate to give up his old notions in regard to the relations of the sexes; or to a reformed Catholic who should still shrink from reading the Bible. Would they not say that these persons ought to consider the matter fully, and clearly understand the new doctrine, and then ought to embrace it, in its entirety? But, above all, let it be considered that what is more wholesome than any particular belief is integrity of belief, and that to avoid looking into the support of any belief from a fear that it may turn out rotten is quite as immoral as it is disadvantageous. The person who confesses that there is such a thing as truth, which is distinguished from falsehood simply by this, that if acted on it will carry us to the point we aim at and not astray, and then, though convinced of this, dares not know the truth and seeks to avoid it, is in a sorry state of mind indeed.

Yes, the other methods do have their merits: a clear logical conscience does cost something—just as any virtue, just as all that we cherish, costs us dear. But we should not desire it to be otherwise. The genius of a man's logical method should be loved and revered as his bride, whom he has chosen from all the world. He need not condemn the others; on the contrary, he may honour them deeply, and in doing so he only honours her the more. But she is the one that he has chosen, and he knows that he was right in making that choice. And having made it, he will work and fight for her, and will not complain that there are blows to take, hoping that there may be as many and as hard to give, and will strive to be the worthy knight and champion of her from the blaze of whose splendours he draws his inspiration and his courage.

WILLIAM JAMES

## The Will to Believe\*

IN THE recently published *Life* by Leslie Stephen of his brother, Fitz-James, there is an account of a school to which the latter went when he was a boy. The teacher, a certain Mr. Guest, used to converse with his pupils in this wise: "Gurney, what is the difference between justification and sanctification?—Stephen, prove the omnipotence of God!" etc. In the midst of our Harvard freethinking and indifference we are prone to imagine that here at your good old orthodox College conversation continues to be somewhat upon this order; and to show you that we at Harvard have not lost all interest in these vital subjects, I have brought with me to-night something like a sermon on justification by faith to read to you—I mean an essay in justification *of* faith, a defence of our right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters, in spite of the fact that our merely logical intellect may not have been coerced. 'The Will to Believe,' accordingly, is the title of my paper.

I have long defended to my own students the lawfulness of voluntarily adopted faith; but as soon as they have got well imbued with the logical spirit, they have as a rule refused to admit my contention to be lawful philosophically, even though in point of fact they were personally all the time chock-full of some faith or other themselves. I am all the while, however, so profoundly convinced that my own position is correct, that your invitation has seemed to me a good occasion to make my statements more clear. Perhaps your minds will be more open than those with which I have hitherto had to deal. I will be as little technical as I can, though I must begin by setting up some technical distinctions that will help us in the end.

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## I

Let us give the name of *hypothesis* to anything that may be proposed to our belief; and just as the electricians speak of live and dead wires, let us speak of any hypothesis as either *live* or *dead*. A live hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed. If I ask you to believe in the Mahdi, the notion makes no electric connection with your nature,—it refuses to scintillate with any credibility at all. As an hypothesis it is completely dead. To an Arab, however (even if he be not one of the Mahdi's followers), the hypothesis is among the mind's possibilities: it is alive. This shows that deadness and liveness in an hypothesis are not intrinsic properties, but relations to the individual thinker. They are measured by his willingness to act. The maximum of liveness in an hypothesis means willingness to act irrevocably. Practically, that means belief; but there is some believing tendency wherever there is willingness to act at all.

Next, let us call the decision between two hypotheses an *option*. Options may be of several kinds. They may be—1, *living* or *dead*; 2, *forced* or *avoidable*; 3, *momentous* or *trivial*; and for our purposes we may call an option a *genuine* option when it is of the forced, living, and momentous kind.

1. A living option is one in which both hypotheses are live ones. If I say to you: "Be a theosophist or be a Mohammedan," it is probably a dead option, because for you neither hypothesis is likely to be alive. But if I say: "Be an agnostic or be a Christian," it is otherwise: trained as you are, each hypothesis makes some appeal, however small, to your belief.

2. Next, if I say to you: "Choose between going out with your umbrella or without it," I do not offer you a genuine option, for it is not forced. You can easily avoid it by not going out at all. Similarly, if I say, "Either love me or hate me," "Either call my theory true or call it false," your option is avoidable. You may remain indifferent to me, neither loving nor hating, and you may decline to offer any judgment as to my theory. But if I say, "Either accept this truth or go without it," I put on you a forced option, for there is no standing place outside of the alternative. Every dilemma based on a complete logical disjunction, with no possibility of not choosing, is an option of this forced kind.

3. Finally, if I were Dr. Nansen and proposed to you to join my North Pole expedition, your option would be momentous; for this would probably be your only similar opportunity, and your choice now would either exclude you from the North Pole sort of immortality altogether or put at least the chance of it into your hands. He who refuses to embrace a unique opportunity loses the prize as surely as if he tried and failed.



*Per contra*, the option is trivial when the opportunity is not unique, when the stake is insignificant, or when the decision is reversible if it later prove unwise. Such trivial options abound in the scientific life. A chemist finds an hypothesis live enough to spend a year in its verification: he believes in it to that extent. But if his experiments prove inconclusive either way, he is quit for his loss of time, no vital harm being done.

It will facilitate our discussion if we keep all these distinctions well in mind.

## II

The next matter to consider is the actual psychology of human opinion. When we look at certain facts, it seems as if our passional and volitional nature lay at the root of all our convictions. When we look at others, it seems as if they could do nothing when the intellect had once said its say. Let us take the latter facts up first.

Does it not seem preposterous on the very face of it to talk of our opinions being modifiable at will? Can our will either help or hinder our intellect in its perceptions of truth? Can we, by just willing it, believe that Abraham Lincoln's existence is a myth, and that the portraits of him in McClure's Magazine are all of some one else? Can we, by any effort of our will, or by any strength of wish that it were true, believe ourselves well and about when we are roaring with rheumatism in bed, or feel certain that the sum of the two one-dollar bills in our pocket must be a hundred dollars? We can *say* any of these things, but we are absolutely impotent to believe them; and of just such things is the whole fabric of the truths that we do believe in made up,—matters of fact, immediate or remote, as Hume said, and relations between ideas, which are either there or not there for us if we see them so, and which if not there cannot be put there by any action of our own.

In Pascal's *Thoughts* there is a celebrated passage known in literature as Pascal's wager. In it he tries to force us into Christianity by reasoning as if our concern with truth resembled our concern with the stakes in a game of chance. Translated freely his words are these: You must either believe or not believe that God is—which will you do? Your human reason cannot say. A game is going on between you and the nature of things which at the day of judgment will bring out either heads or tails. Weigh what your gains and your losses would be if you should stake all you have on heads, or God's existence: if you win in such case, you gain eternal beatitude; if you lose, you lose nothing at all. If there were an infinity of chances, and only one for God in this wager, still you ought to stake your all on God; for though you surely risk a finite loss by this procedure, any finite loss is reasonable, even a certain one is

reasonable, if there is but the possibility of infinite gain. Go, then, and take holy water, and have masses said; belief will come and stupefy your scruples,—*Cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira.* Why should you not? At bottom, what have you to lose?

You probably feel that when religious faith expresses itself thus, in the language of the gaming-table, it is put to its last trumps. Surely Pascal's own personal belief in masses and holy water had far other springs; and this celebrated page of his is but an argument for others, a last desperate snatch at a weapon against the hardness of the unbelieving heart. We feel that a faith in masses and holy water adopted wilfully after such a mechanical calculation would lack the inner soul of faith's reality; and if we were ourselves in the place of the Deity, we should probably take particular pleasure in cutting off believers of this pattern from their infinite reward. It is evident that unless there be some pre-existing tendency to believe in masses and holy water, the option offered to the will by Pascal is not a living option. Certainly no Turk ever took to masses and holy water on its account; and even to us Protestants these means of salvation seem such foregone impossibilities that Pascal's logic, invoked for them specifically, leaves us unmoved. As well might the Mahdi write to us, saying, "I am the Expected One whom God has created in his effulgence. You shall be infinitely happy if you confess me; otherwise you shall be cut off from the light of the sun. Weigh, then, your infinite gain if I am genuine against your finite sacrifice if I am not!" His logic would be that of Pascal; but he would vainly use it on us, for the hypothesis he offers us is dead. No tendency to act on it exists in us to any degree.

The talk of believing by our volition seems, then, from one point of view, simply silly. From another point of view it is worse than silly, it is vile. When one turns to the magnificent edifice of the physical sciences, and sees how it was reared; what thousands of disinterested moral lives of men lie buried in its mere foundations; what patience and postponement, what choking down of preference, what submission to the icy laws of outer fact are wrought into its very stones and mortar; how absolutely impersonal it stands in its vast augustness,—then how besotted and contemptible seems every little sentimentalist who comes blowing his voluntary smoke-wreaths, and pretending to decide things from out of his private dream! Can we wonder if those bred in the rugged and manly school of science should feel like spewing such subjectivism out of their mouths? The whole system of loyalties which grow up in the schools of science go dead against its toleration; so that it is only natural that those who have caught the scientific fever should pass over to the opposite extreme, and write sometimes as if the incorruptibly truthful intellect ought

positively to prefer bitterness and unacceptableness to the heart in its cup.

It fortifies my soul to know  
That, though I perish, Truth is so—

sings Clough, while Huxley exclaims: "My only consolation lies in the reflection that, however bad our posterity may become, so far as they hold by the plain rule of not pretending to believe what they have no reason to believe, because it may be to their advantage so to pretend (the word 'pretend' is surely here redundant), they will not have reached the lowest depth of immorality." And that delicious *enfant terrible* Clifford writes: "Belief is desecrated when given to unproved and unquestioned statements for the solace and private pleasure of the believer. . . . Whoso would deserve well of his fellows in this matter will guard the purity of his belief with a very fanaticism of jealous care, lest at any time it should rest on an unworthy object, and catch a stain which can never be wiped away. . . . If [a] belief has been accepted on insufficient evidence [even though the belief be true, as Clifford on the same page explains] the pleasure is a stolen one. . . . It is sinful because it is stolen in defiance of our duty to mankind. That duty is to guard ourselves from such beliefs as from a pestilence which may shortly master our own body and then spread to the rest of the town. . . . It is wrong always, everywhere, and for every one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."

### III

All this strikes one as healthy, even when expressed, as by Clifford, with somewhat too much of robustious pathos in the voice. Free-will and simple wishing do seem, in the matter of our credences, to be only fifth wheels to the coach. Yet if any one should thereupon assume that intellectual insight is what remains after wish and will and sentimental preference have taken wing, or that pure reason is what then settles our opinions, he would fly quite as directly in the teeth of the facts.

It is only our already dead hypotheses that our willing nature is unable to bring to life again. But what has made them dead for us is for the most part a previous action of our willing nature of an antagonistic kind. When I say 'willing nature,' I do not mean only such deliberate volitions as may have set up habits of belief that we cannot now escape from,—I mean all such factors of belief as fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our caste and set. As a matter of fact we find ourselves believing, we hardly know how or why. Mr. Balfour gives the name of 'authority' to all those influences, born of the intellectual climate, that make hypotheses possible or impossible for us, alive or dead. Here in this room, we all of us believe in

molecules and the conservation of energy, in democracy and necessary progress, in Protestant Christianity and the duty of fighting for 'the doctrine of the immortal Monroe,' all for no reasons worthy of the name. We see into these matters with no more inner clearness, and probably with much less, than any disbeliever in them might possess. His unconventionality would probably have some grounds to show for its conclusions; but for us, not insight, but the *prestige* of the opinions, is what makes the spark shoot from them and light up our sleeping magazines of faith. Our reason is quite satisfied, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand of us, if it can find a few arguments that will do to recite in case our credulity is criticised by some one else. Our faith is faith in some one else's faith, and in the greatest matters this is most the case. Our belief in truth itself, for instance, that there is a truth, and that our minds and it are made for each other,—what is it but a passionate affirmation of desire, in which our social system backs us up? We want to have a truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better and better position towards it; and on this line we agree to fight out our thinking lives. But if a pyrrhonic sceptic asks us *how we know* all this, can our logic find a reply? No! certainly it cannot. It is just one volition against another,—we willing to go in for life upon a trust or assumption which he, for his part, does not care to make.\*

As a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use. Clifford's cosmic emotions find no use for Christian feelings. Huxley belabors the bishops because there is no use for sacerdotalism in his scheme of life. Newman, on the contrary, goes over to Romanism, and finds all sorts of reasons good for staying there, because a priestly system is for him an organic need and delight. Why do so few 'scientists' even look at the evidence for telepathy, so called? Because they think, as a leading biologist, now dead, once said to me, that even if such a thing were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it suppressed and concealed. It would undo the uniformity of Nature and all sorts of other things without which scientists cannot carry on their pursuits. But if this very man had been shown something which as a scientist he might *do* with telepathy, he might not only have examined the evidence, but even have found it good enough. This very law which the logicians would impose upon us—if I may give the name of logicians to those who would rule out our willing nature here—is based on nothing but their own natural wish to exclude all elements for which they, in their professional quality of logicians, can find no use.

\* Compare the admirable page 310 in S. H. Hodgson's "Time and Space," London, 1865.

Evidently, then, our non-intellectual nature does influence our convictions. There are passional tendencies and volitions which run before and others which come after belief, and it is only the latter that are too late for the fair; and they are not too late when the previous passional work has been already in their own direction. Pascal's argument, instead of being powerless, then seems a regular clincher, and is the last stroke needed to make our faith in masses and holy water complete. The state of things is evidently far from simple; and pure insight and logic, whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds.

## IV

Our next duty, having recognized this mixed-up state of affairs, is to ask whether it be simply reprehensible and pathological, or whether, on the contrary, we must treat it as a normal element in making up our minds. The thesis I defend is, briefly stated, this: *Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision,—just like deciding yes or no,—and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth.* The thesis thus abstractly expressed will, I trust, soon become quite clear. But I must first indulge in a bit more of preliminary work.

## V

It will be observed that for the purposes of this discussion we are on 'dogmatic' ground,—ground, I mean, which leaves systematic philosophical scepticism altogether out of account. The postulate that there is truth, and that it is the destiny of our minds to attain it, we are deliberately resolving to make, though the sceptic will not make it. We part company with him, therefore, absolutely, at this point. But the faith that truth exists, and that our minds can find it, may be held in two ways. We may talk of the *empiricist* way and of the *absolutist* way of believing in truth. The absolutists in this matter say that we not only can attain to knowing truth, but we can *know when* we have attained to knowing it; while the empiricists think that although we may attain it, we cannot infallibly know when. To *know* is one thing, and to know for certain *that* we know is another. One may hold to the first being possible without the second; hence the empiricists and the absolutists, although neither of them is a sceptic in the usual philosophic sense of the term, show very different degrees of dogmatism in their lives.

If we look at the history of opinions, we see that the empiricist tendency

has largely prevailed in science, while in philosophy the absolutist tendency has had everything its own way. The characteristic sort of happiness, indeed, which philosophies yield has mainly consisted in the conviction felt by each successive school or system that by it bottom-certitude had been attained. "Other philosophies are collections of opinions, mostly false; *my* philosophy gives standing-ground forever,"—who does not recognize in this the key-note of every system worthy of the name? A system, to be a system at all, must come as a *closed* system, reversible in this or that detail, perchance, but in its essential features never!

Scholastic orthodoxy, to which one must always go when one wishes to find perfectly clear statement, has beautifully elaborated this absolutist conviction in a doctrine which it calls that of 'objective evidence.' If, for example, I am unable to doubt that I now exist before you, that two is less than three, or that if all men are mortal then I am mortal too, it is because these things illumine my intellect irresistibly. The final ground of this objective evidence possessed by certain propositions is the *adæquatio intellectûs nostri cum rê*. The certitude it brings involves an *aptitudinem ad extorquendum certum assensum* on the part of the truth envisaged, and on the side of the subject a *quietem in cognitione*, when once the object is mentally received, that leaves no possibility of doubt behind; and in the whole transaction nothing operates but the *entitas ipsa* of the object and the *entitas ipsa* of the mind. We slouchy modern thinkers dislike to talk in Latin,—indeed, we dislike to talk in set terms at all; but at bottom our own state of mind is very much like this whenever we uncritically abandon ourselves: You believe in objective evidence, and I do. Of some things we feel that we are certain: we know, and we know that we do know. There is something that gives a click inside of us, a bell that strikes twelve, when the hands of our mental clock have swept the dial and meet over the meridian hour. The greatest empiricists among us are only empiricists on reflection: when left to their instincts, they dogmatize like infallible popes. When the Cliffords tell us how sinful it is to be Christians on such 'insufficient evidence,' insufficiency is really the last thing they have in mind. For them the evidence is absolutely sufficient, only it makes the other way. They believe so completely in an anti-Christian order of the universe that there is no living option: Christianity is a dead hypothesis from the start.

## VI

But now, since we are all such absolutists by instinct, what in our quality of students of philosophy ought we to do about the fact? Shall we espouse and indorse it? Or shall we treat it as a weakness of our nature from which we must free ourselves, if we can?

I sincerely believe that the latter course is the only one we can follow as reflective men. Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with, but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found? I am, therefore, myself a complete empiricist so far as my theory of human knowledge goes. I live, to be sure, by the practical faith that we must go on experiencing and thinking over our experience, for only thus can our opinions grow more true; but to hold any one of them—I absolutely do not care which—as if it never could be reinterpretable or corrigible, I believe to be a tremendously mistaken attitude, and I think that the whole history of philosophy will bear me out. There is but one indefectibly certain truth, and that is the truth that pyrrhonic scepticism itself leaves standing,—the truth that the present phenomenon of consciousness exists. That, however, is the bare starting-point of knowledge, the mere admission of a stuff to be philosophized about. The various philosophies are but so many attempts at expressing what this stuff really is. And if we repair to our libraries what disagreement do we discover! Where is a certainly true answer found? Apart from abstract propositions of comparison (such as two and two are the same as four), propositions which tell us nothing by themselves about concrete reality, we find no proposition ever regarded by any one as evidently certain that has not either been called a falsehood, or at least had its truth sincerely questioned by some one else. The transcending of the axioms of geometry, not in play but in earnest, by certain of our contemporaries (as Zöllner and Charles H. Hinton), and the rejection of the whole Aristotelian logic by the Hegelians, are striking instances in point.

No concrete test of what is really true has ever been agreed upon. Some make the criterion external to the moment of perception, putting it either in revelation, the *consensus gentium*, the instincts of the heart, or the systematized experience of the race. Others make the perceptive moment its own test,—Descartes, for instance, with his clear and distinct ideas guaranteed by the veracity of God; Reid with his ‘common-sense;’ and Kant with his forms of synthetic judgment *a priori*. The inconceivability of the opposite; the capacity to be verified by sense; the possession of complete organic unity or self-relation, realized when a thing is its own other,—are standards which, in turn, have been used. The much lauded objective evidence is never triumphantly there; it is a mere aspiration or *Grenzbegriff*, marking the infinitely remote ideal of our thinking life. To claim that certain truths now possess it, is simply to say that when you think them true and they *are* true, then their evidence is objective, otherwise it is not. But practically one’s conviction that the evidence one goes by is of the real objective brand, is only one more

subjective opinion added to the lot. For what a contradictory array of opinions have objective evidence and absolute certitude been claimed! The world is rational through and through,—its existence is an ultimate brute fact; there is a personal God,—a personal God is inconceivable; there is an extra-mental physical world immediately known,—the mind can only know its own ideas; a moral imperative exists,—obligation is only the resultant of desires; a permanent spiritual principle is in every one,—there are only shifting states of mind; there is an endless chain of causes,—there is an absolute first cause; an eternal necessity,—a freedom; a purpose,—no purpose; a primal One,—a primal Many; a universal continuity,—an essential discontinuity in things; an infinity,—no infinity. There is this,—there is that; there is indeed nothing which some one has not thought absolutely true, while his neighbor deemed it absolutely false; and not an absolutist among them seems ever to have considered that the trouble may all the time be essential, and that the intellect, even with truth directly in its grasp, may have no infallible signal for knowing whether it be truth or no. When, indeed, one remembers that the most striking practical application to life of the doctrine of objective certitude has been the conscientious labors of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, one feels less tempted than ever to lend the doctrine a respectful ear.

But please observe, now, that when as empiricists we give up the doctrine of objective certitude, we do not thereby give up the quest or hope of truth itself. We still pin our faith on its existence, and still believe that we gain an ever better position towards it by systematically continuing to roll up experiences and think. Our great difference from the scholastic lies in the way we face. The strength of his system lies in the principles, the origin, the *terminus a quo* of his thought; for us the strength is in the outcome, the upshot, the *terminus ad quem*. Not where it comes from but what it leads to is to decide. It matters not to an empiricist from what quarter an hypothesis may come to him: he may have acquired it by fair means or by foul; passion may have whispered or accident suggested it; but if the total drift of thinking continues to confirm it, that is what he means by its being true.

## VII

One more point, small but important, and our preliminaries are done. There are two ways of looking at our duty in the matter of opinion,—ways entirely different, and yet ways about whose difference the theory of knowledge seems hitherto to have shown very little concern. *We must know the truth*; and *we must avoid error*,—these are our first and great commandments as would-be knowers; but they are not two ways of



stating an identical commandment, they are two separable laws. Although it may indeed happen that when we believe the truth *A*, we escape as an incidental consequence from believing the falsehood *B*, it hardly ever happens that by merely disbelieving *B* we necessarily believe *A*. We may in escaping *B* fall into believing other falsehoods, *C* or *D*, just as bad as *B*; or we may escape *B* by not believing anything at all, not even *A*.

Believe truth! Shun error!—these, we see, are two materially different laws; and by choosing between them we may end by coloring differently our whole intellectual life. We may regard the chase for truth as paramount, and the avoidance of error as secondary; or we may, on the other hand, treat the avoidance of error as more imperative, and let truth take its chance. Clifford, in the instructive passage which I have quoted, exhorts us to the latter course. Believe nothing, he tells us, keep your mind in suspense forever, rather than by closing it on insufficient evidence incur the awful risk of believing lies. You, on the other hand, may think that the risk of being in error is a very small matter when compared with the blessings of real knowledge, and be ready to be duped many times in your investigation rather than postpone indefinitely the chance of guessing true. I myself find it impossible to go with Clifford. We must remember that these feelings of our duty about either truth or error are in any case only expressions of our passional life. Biologically considered, our minds are as ready to grind out falsehood as veracity, and he who says, "Better go without belief forever than believe a lie!" merely shows his own preponderant private horror of becoming a dupe. He may be critical of many of his desires and fears, but this fear he slavishly obeys. He cannot imagine any one questioning its binding force. For my own part, I have also a horror of being duped; but I can believe that worse things than being duped may happen to a man in this world: so Clifford's exhortation has to my ears a thoroughly fantastic sound. It is like a general informing his soldiers that it is better to keep out of battle forever than to risk a single wound. Not so are victories either over enemies or over nature gained. Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness on their behalf. At any rate, it seems the fittest thing for the empiricist philosopher.

## VIII

And now, after all this introduction, let us go straight at our question. I have said, and now repeat it, that not only as a matter of fact do we find our passional nature influencing us in our opinions, but that there

are some options between opinions in which this influence must be regarded both as an inevitable and as a lawful determinant of our choice.

I fear here that some of you my hearers will begin to scent danger, and lend an inhospitable ear. Two first steps of passion you have indeed had to admit as necessary,—we must think so as to avoid dupery, and we must think so as to gain truth; but the surest path to those ideal consummations, you will probably consider, is from now onwards to take no further passional step.

Well, of course, I agree as far as the facts will allow. Wherever the option between losing truth and gaining it is not momentous, we can throw the chance of *gaining truth* away, and at any rate save ourselves from any chance of *believing falsehood*, by not making up our minds at all till objective evidence has come. In scientific questions, this is almost always the case; and even in human affairs in general, the need of acting is seldom so urgent that a false belief to act on is better than no belief at all. Law courts, indeed, have to decide on the best evidence attainable for the moment, because a judge's duty is to make law as well as to ascertain it, and (as a learned judge once said to me) few cases are worth spending much time over: the great thing is to have them decided on *any* acceptable principle, and got out of the way. But in our dealings with objective nature we obviously are recorders, not makers, of the truth; and decisions for the mere sake of deciding promptly and getting on to the next business would be wholly out of place. Throughout the breadth of physical nature facts are what they are quite independently of us, and seldom is there any such hurry about them that the risks of being duped by believing a premature theory need be faced. The questions here are always trivial options, the hypotheses are hardly living (at any rate not living for us spectators), the choice between believing truth or falsehood is seldom forced. The attitude of sceptical balance is therefore the absolutely wise one if we would escape mistakes. What difference, indeed, does it make to most of us whether we have or have not a theory of the Röntgen rays, whether we believe or not in mind-stuff, or have a conviction about the causality of conscious states? It makes no difference. Such options are not forced on us. On every account it is better not to make them, but still keep weighing reasons *pro et contra* with an indifferent hand.

I speak, of course, here of the purely judging mind. For purposes of discovery such indifference is to be less highly recommended, and science would be far less advanced than she is if the passionate desires of individuals to get their own faiths confirmed had been kept out of the game. See for example the sagacity which Spencer and Weismann now display. On the other hand, if you want an absolute duffer in an investigation,

you must, after all, take the man who has no interest whatever in its results: he is the warranted incapable, the positive fool. The most useful investigator, because the most sensitive observer, is always he whose eager interest in one side of the question is balanced by an equally keen nervousness lest he become deceived.\* Science has organized this nervousness into a regular *technique*, her so-called method of verification; and she has fallen so deeply in love with the method that one may even say she has ceased to care for truth by itself at all. It is only truth as technically verified that interests her. The truth of truths might come in merely affirmative form, and she would decline to touch it. Such truth as that, she might repeat with Clifford, would be stolen in defiance of her duty to mankind. Human passions, however, are stronger than technical rules. "Le cœur a ses raisons," as Pascal says, "que la raison ne connaît pas;" and however indifferent to all but the bare rules of the game the umpire, the abstract intellect, may be, the concrete players who furnish him the materials to judge of are usually, each one of them, in love with some pet 'live hypothesis' of his own. Let us agree, however, that wherever there is no forced option, the dispassionately judicial intellect with no pet hypothesis, saving us, as it does, from dupery at any rate, ought to be our ideal.

The question next arises: Are there not somewhere forced options in our speculative questions, and can we (as men who may be interested at least as much in positively gaining truth as in merely escaping dupery) always wait with impunity till the coercive evidence shall have arrived? It seems *a priori* improbable that the truth should be so nicely adjusted to our needs and powers as that. In the great boarding-house of nature, the cakes and the butter and the syrup seldom come out so even and leave the plates so clean. Indeed, we should view them with scientific suspicion if they did.

## IX

*Moral questions* immediately present themselves as questions whose solution cannot wait for sensible proof. A moral question is a question not of what sensibly exists, but of what is good, or would be good if it did exist. Science can tell us what exists; but to compare the *worths*, both of what exists and of what does not exist, we must consult not science, but what Pascal calls our heart. Science herself consults her heart when she lays it down that the infinite ascertainment of fact and correction of false belief are the supreme goods for man. Challenge the statement, and science can only repeat it oracularly, or else prove it by showing

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\* Compare Wilfrid Ward's Essay, "The Wish to Believe," in his *Witnesses to the Unseen*, Macmillan & Co., 1893.

that such ascertainment and correction bring man all sorts of other goods which man's heart in turn declares. The question of having moral beliefs at all or not having them is decided by our will. Are our moral preferences true or false, or are they only odd biological phenomena, making things good or bad for *us*, but in themselves indifferent? How can your pure intellect decide? If your heart does not *want* a world of moral reality, your head will assuredly never make you believe in one. Mephistophelian scepticism, indeed, will satisfy the head's play-instincts much better than any rigorous idealism can. Some men (even at the student age) are so naturally cool-hearted that the moralistic hypothesis never has for them any pungent life, and in their supercilious presence the hot young moralist always feels strangely ill at ease. The appearance of knowingness is on their side, of *naïveté* and gullibility on his. Yet, in the inarticulate heart of him, he clings to it that he is not a dupe, and that there is a realm in which (as Emerson says) all their wit and intellectual superiority is no better than the cunning of a fox. Moral scepticism can no more be refuted or proved by logic than intellectual scepticism can. When we stick to it that there *is* truth (be it of either kind), we do so with our whole nature, and resolve to stand or fall by the results. The sceptic with his whole nature adopts the doubting attitude; but which of us is the wiser, Omniscience only knows.

Turn now from these wide questions of good to a certain class of questions of fact, questions concerning personal relations, states of mind between one man and another. *Do you like me or not?*—for example. Whether you do or not depends, in countless instances, on whether I meet you half-way, am willing to assume that you must like me, and show you trust and expectation. The previous faith on my part in your liking's existence is in such cases what makes your liking come. But if I stand aloof, and refuse to budge an inch until I have objective evidence, until you shall have done something apt, as the absolutists say, *ad extorquendum assensum meum*, ten to one your liking never comes. How many women's hearts are vanquished by the mere sanguine insistence of some man that they *must* love him! he will not consent to the hypothesis that they cannot. The desire for a certain kind of truth here brings about that special truth's existence; and so it is in innumerable cases of other sorts. Who gains promotions, boons, appointments, but the man in whose life they are seen to play the part of live hypotheses, who discounts them, sacrifices other things for their sake before they have come, and takes risks for them in advance? His faith acts on the powers above him as a claim, and creates its own verification.

A social organism of any sort whatever, large or small, is what it is because each member proceeds to his own duty with a trust that the other

members will simultaneously do theirs. Wherever a desired result is achieved by the co-operation of many independent persons, its existence as a fact is a pure consequence of the precursive faith in one another of those immediately concerned. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this condition, without which not only is nothing achieved, but nothing is even attempted. A whole train of passengers (individually brave enough) will be looted by a few highwaymen, simply because the latter can count on one another, while each passenger fears that if he makes a movement of resistance, he will be shot before any one else backs him up. If we believed that the whole car-full would rise at once with us, we should each severally rise, and train-robbing would never even be attempted. There are, then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming. And where faith in a fact can help create the fact, that would be an insane logic which should say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence is the 'lowest kind of immorality' into which a thinking being can fall. Yet such is the logic by which our scientific absolutists pretend to regulate our lives!

## X

In truths dependent on our personal action, then, faith based on desire is certainly a lawful and possibly an indispensable thing.

But now, it will be said, these are all childish human cases, and have nothing to do with great cosmical matters, like the question of religious faith. Let us then pass on to that. Religions differ so much in their accidents that in discussing the religious question we must make it very generic and broad. What then do we now mean by the religious hypothesis? Science says things are; morality says some things are better than other things; and religion says essentially two things.

First, she says that the best things are the more eternal things, the overlapping things, the things in the universe that throw the last stone, so to speak, and say the final word. "Perfection is eternal."—this phrase of Charles Secrétan seems a good way of putting this first affirmation of religion, an affirmation which obviously cannot yet be verified scientifically at all.

The second affirmation of religion is that we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true.

Now, let us consider what the logical elements of this situation are *in case the religious hypothesis in both its branches be really true.* (Of course, we must admit that possibility at the outset. If we are to discuss the question at all, it must involve a living option. If for any of you religion be a hypothesis that cannot, by any living possibility be true, then you need

go no farther. I speak to the 'saving remnant' alone.) So proceeding, we see, first that religion offers itself as a *momentous* option. We are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief, and to lose by our non-belief, a certain vital good. Secondly, religion is a *forced* option, so far as that good goes. We cannot escape the issue by remaining sceptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way *if religion be untrue*, we lose the good, *if it be true*, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve. It is as if a man should hesitate indefinitely to ask a certain woman to marry him because he was not perfectly sure that she would prove an angel after he brought her home. Would he not cut himself off from that particular angel-possibility as decisively as if he went and married some one else? Scepticism, then, is not avoidance of option; it is option of a certain particular kind of risk. *Better risk loss of truth than chance of error*,—that is your faith-vetoer's exact position. He is actively playing his stake as much as the believer is; he is backing the field against the religious hypothesis, just as the believer is backing the religious hypothesis against the field. To preach scepticism to us as a duty until 'sufficient evidence' for religion be found, is tantamount therefore to telling us, when in presence of the religious hypothesis, that to yield to our fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true. It is not intellect against all passions, then; it is only intellect with one passion laying down its law. And by what, forsooth, is the supreme wisdom of this passion warranted? Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear? I, for one, can see no proof; and I simply refuse obedience to the scientist's command to imitate his kind of option, in a case where my own stake is important enough to give me the right to choose my own form of risk. If religion be true and the evidence for it be still insufficient, I do not wish, by putting your extinguisher upon my nature (which feels to me as if it had after all some business in this matter), to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side,—that chance depending, of course, on my willingness to run the risk of acting as if my passional need of taking the world religiously might be prophetic and right.

All this is on the supposition that it really may be prophetic and right, and that, even to us who are discussing the matter, religion is a live hypothesis which may be true. Now, to most of us religion comes in a still further way that makes a veto on our active faith even more illogical. The more perfect and more eternal aspect of the universe is represented in our religions as having personal form. The universe is no longer a mere *It* to us, but a *Thou*, if we are religious; and any relation that may be possible from person to person might be possible here. For instance,

although in one sense we are passive portions of the universe, in another we show a curious autonomy, as if we were small active centres on our own account. We feel, too, as if the appeal of religion to us were made to our own active good-will, as if evidence might be forever withheld from us unless we met the hypothesis half-way. To take a trivial illustration: just as a man who in a company of gentlemen made no advances, asked a warrant for every concession, and believed no one's word without proof, would cut himself off by such churlishness from all the social rewards that a more trusting spirit would earn,—so here, one who should shut himself up in snarling logicity and try to make the gods extort his recognition willy-nilly, or not get it at all, might cut himself off forever from his only opportunity of making the gods' acquaintance. This feeling, forced on us we know not whence, that by obstinately believing that there are gods (although not to do so would be so easy both for our logic and our life) we are doing the universe the deepest service we can, seems part of the living essence of the religious hypothesis. If the hypothesis *were* true in all its parts, including this one, then pure intellectualism, with its veto on our making willing advances, would be an absurdity; and some participation of our sympathetic nature would be logically required. I, therefore, for one, cannot see my way to accepting the agnostic rules for truth-seeking, or wilfully agree to keep my willing nature out of the game. I cannot do so for this plain reason, that *a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.* That for me is the long and short of the formal logic of the situation, no matter what the kinds of truth might materially be.

I confess I do not see how this logic can be escaped. But sad experience makes me fear that some of you may still shrink from radically saying with me, *in abstracto*, that we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will. I suspect, however, that if this is so, it is because you have got away from the abstract logical point of view altogether, and are thinking (perhaps without realizing it) of some particular religious hypothesis which for you is dead. The freedom to 'believe what we will' you apply to the case of some patent superstition; and the faith you think of is the faith defined by the schoolboy when he said, "Faith is when you believe something that you know ain't true." I can only repeat that this is misapprehension. *In concreto*, the freedom to believe can only cover living options which the intellect of the individual cannot by itself resolve; and living options never seem absurdities to him who has them to consider. When I look at the religious question as it really puts itself to concrete men, and when I think of all

the possibilities which both practically and theoretically it involves, then this command that we shall put a stopper on our heart, instincts, and courage, and *wait*—acting of course meanwhile more or less as if religion were *not* true\*—till doomsday, or till such time as our intellect and senses working together may have raked in evidence enough,—this command, I say, seems to me the queerest idol ever manufactured in the philosophic cave. Were we scholastic absolutists, there might be more excuse. If we had an infallible intellect with its objective certitudes, we might feel ourselves disloyal to such a perfect organ of knowledge in not trusting to it exclusively, in not waiting for its releasing word. *But* if we are empiricists, if we believe that no bell in us tolls to let us know for certain when truth is in our grasp, then it seems a piece of idle fantasticality to preach so solemnly our duty of waiting for the bell. Indeed we *may* wait if we will,—I hope you do not think that I am denying that,—but if we do so, we do so at our peril as much as if we believed. In either case we *act*, taking our life in our hands. No one of us ought to issue vetoes to the other, nor should we bandy words of abuse. We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism's glory; then only shall we live and let live, in speculative as well as in practical things.

I began by a reference to Fitz James Stephen; let me end by a quotation from him. "What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? . . . These are questions with which all must deal as it seems good to them. They are riddles of the Sphinx, and in some way or other we must deal with them. . . . In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark. . . . If we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that, too, is a choice: but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril. If a man chooses to turn his back altogether on God and the future, no one can prevent him; no one can show beyond reasonable doubt that he is mistaken. If a man thinks otherwise and acts as he thinks, I do not see that any one can prove that *he* is mistaken. Each must act as he thinks best; and if

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\* Since belief is measured by action, he who forbids us to believe religion to be true, necessarily also forbids us act as we should if we did believe it to be true. The whole defence of religious faith hinges upon action. If the action required or inspired by the religious hypothesis is in no way different from that dictated by the naturalistic hypothesis, then religious faith is a pure superfluity, better pruned away, and controversy about its legitimacy is a piece of idle trifling, unworthy of serious minds. I myself believe, of course, that the religious hypothesis gives to the world an expression which specifically determines our reactions, and makes them in a large part unlike what they might be on a purely naturalistic scheme of belief.



he is wrong, so much the worse for him. We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? 'Be strong and of a good courage.' Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. . . . If death ends all, we cannot meet death better."\*

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\* Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, p. 353, 2d edition. London, 1874.

JOHN DEWEY

## Reconstruction in Moral Conceptions\*

THE IMPACT of the alteration in methods of scientific thinking upon moral ideas is, in general, obvious. Goods, ends are multiplied. Rules are softened into principles, and principles are modified into methods of understanding. Ethical theory began among the Greeks as an attempt to find a regulation for the conduct of life which should have a rational basis and purpose instead of being derived from custom. But reason as a substitute for custom was under the obligation of supplying objects and laws as fixed as those of custom had been. Ethical theory ever since has been singularly hypnotized by the notion that its business is to discover some final end or good or some ultimate and supreme law. This is the common element among the diversity of theories. Some have held that the end is loyalty or obedience to a higher power or authority; and they have variously found this higher principle in Divine Will, the will of the secular ruler, the maintenance of institutions in which the purpose of superiors is embodied, and the rational consciousness of duty. But they have differed from one another because there was one point in which they were agreed: a single and final source of law. Others have asserted that it is impossible to locate morality in conformity to law-giving power, and that it must be sought in ends that are goods. And some have sought the good in self-realization, some in holiness, some in happiness, some in the greatest possible aggregate of pleasures. And yet these schools have agreed in the assumption that there is a single, fixed and final good. They have been able to dispute with one another only because of their common premise.

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The question arises whether the way out of the confusion and conflict is not to go to the root of the matter by questioning this common element. Is not the belief in the single, final and ultimate (whether conceived as good or as authoritative law) an intellectual product of that feudal organization which is disappearing historically and of that belief in a bounded, ordered cosmos, wherein rest is higher than motion, which has disappeared from natural science? It has been repeatedly suggested that the present limit of intellectual reconstruction lies in the fact that it has not as yet been seriously applied in the moral and social disciplines. Would not this further application demand precisely that we advance to a belief in a plurality of changing, moving, individualized goods and ends, and to a belief that principles, criteria, laws are intellectual instruments for analyzing individual or unique situations?

The blunt assertion that every moral situation is a unique situation having its own irreplaceable good may seem not merely blunt but preposterous. For the established tradition teaches that it is precisely the irregularity of special cases which makes necessary the guidance of conduct by universals, and that the essence of the virtuous disposition is willingness to subordinate every particular case to adjudication by a fixed principle. It would then follow that submission of a generic end and law to determination by the concrete situation entails complete confusion and unrestrained licentiousness. Let us, however, follow the pragmatic rule, and in order to discover the meaning of the idea ask for its consequences. Then it surprisingly turns out that the primary significance of the unique and morally ultimate character of the concrete situation is to transfer the weight and burden of morality to intelligence. It does not destroy responsibility; it only locates it. A moral situation is one in which judgment and choice are required antecedently to overt action. The practical meaning of the situation—that is to say the action needed to satisfy it—is not self-evident. It has to be searched for. There are conflicting desires and alternative apparent goods. What is needed is to find the right course of action, the right good. Hence, inquiry is exacted: observation of the detailed makeup of the situation; analysis into its diverse factors; clarification of what is obscure; discounting the more insistent and vivid traits; tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves; regarding the decision reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences which led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence. Our moral failures go back to some weakness of disposition, some absence of sympathy, some onesided bias that makes us perform the judgment of the concrete case carelessly or perversely. Wide sympathy, keen sensitiveness, persistence in the face of the disagree-

able, balance of interests enabling us to undertake the work of analysis and decision intelligently are the distinctively moral traits—the virtues or moral excellencies.

It is worth noting once more that the underlying issue is, after all, only the same as that which has been already threshed out in physical inquiry. There too it long seemed as if rational assurance and demonstration could be attained only if we began with universal conceptions and subsumed particular cases under them. The men who initiated the methods of inquiry that are now everywhere adopted were denounced in their day (and sincerely) as subverters of truth and foes of science. If they have won in the end, it is because, as has already been pointed out, the method of universals confirmed prejudices and sanctioned ideas that had gained currency irrespective of evidence for them; while placing the initial and final weight upon the individual case, stimulated painstaking inquiry into facts and examination of principles. In the end, loss of eternal truths was more than compensated for in the accession of quotidian facts. The loss of the system of superior and fixed definitions and kinds was more than made up for by the growing system of hypotheses and laws used in classifying facts. After all, then, we are only pleading for the adoption in moral reflection of the logic that has been proved to make for security, stringency and fertility in passing judgment upon physical phenomena. And the reason is the same. The old method in spite of its nominal and esthetic worship of reason discouraged reason, because it hindered the operation of scrupulous and unremitting inquiry.

More definitely, the transfer of the burden of the moral life from following rules or pursuing fixed ends over to the detection of the ills that need remedy in a special case and the formation of plans and methods for dealing with them, eliminates the causes which have kept moral theory controversial, and which have also kept it remote from helpful contact with the exigencies of practice. The theory of fixed ends inevitably leads thought into the bog of disputes that cannot be settled. If there is one *summum bonum*, one supreme end, what is it? To consider this problem is to place ourselves in the midst of controversies that are as acute now as they were two thousand years ago. Suppose we take a seemingly more empirical view, and say that while there is not a single end, there also are not as many as there are specific situations that require amelioration; but there are a number of such natural goods as health, wealth, honor or good name, friendship, esthetic appreciation, learning and such moral goods as justice, temperance, benevolence, etc. What or who is to decide the right of way when these ends conflict with one another, as they are sure to do? Shall we resort to the method that once brought such disrepute upon the whole business of ethics: Casuistry? Or shall

we have recourse to what Bentham well called the *ipse dixit* method: the arbitrary preference of this or that person for this or that end? Or shall we be forced to arrange them all in an order of degrees from the highest good down to the least precious? Again we find ourselves in the middle of unreconciled disputes with no indication of the way out.

Meantime, the special moral perplexities where the aid of intelligence is required go unenlightened. We cannot seek or attain health, wealth, learning, justice or kindness in general. Action is always specific, concrete, individualized, unique. And consequently judgments as to acts to be performed must be similarly specific. To say that a man seeks health or justice is only to say that he seeks to live healthily or justly. These things, like truth, are adverbial. They are modifiers of action in special cases. How to live healthily or justly is a matter which differs with every person. It varies with his past experience, his opportunities, his temperamental and acquired weaknesses and abilities. Not man in general but a particular man suffering from some particular disability aims to live healthily, and consequently health cannot mean for him exactly what it means for any other mortal. Healthy living is not something to be attained by itself apart from other ways of living. A man needs to be healthy *in* his life, not apart from it, and what does life mean except the aggregate of his pursuits and activities? A man who aims at health as a distinct end becomes a valetudinarian, or a fanatic, or a mechanical performer of exercises, or an athlete so one-sided that his pursuit of bodily development injures his heart. When the endeavor to realize a so-called end does not temper and color all other activities, life is portioned out into strips and fractions. Certain acts and times are devoted to getting health, others to cultivating religion, others to seeking learning, to being a good citizen, a devotee of fine art and so on. This is the only logical alternative to subordinating all aims to the accomplishment of one alone—fanaticism. This is out of fashion at present, but who can say how much of distraction and dissipation in life, and how much of its hard and narrow rigidity is the outcome of men's failure to realize that each situation has its own unique end and that the whole personality should be concerned with it? Surely, once more, what a man needs is to live healthily, and this result so affects all the activities of his life that it cannot be set up as a separate and independent good.

Nevertheless the general notions of health, disease, justice, artistic culture are of great importance: Not, however, because this or that case may be brought exhaustively under a single head and its specific traits shut out, but because generalized science provides a man as physician and artist and citizen, with questions to ask, investigations to make, and enables him to understand the meaning of what he sees. Just in the degree

in which a physician in his work he uses his science, no matter how extensive and accurate, to furnish him with tools of inquiry into the individual case, and with methods of forecasting a method of dealing with it. Just in the degree in which, no matter how great his learning, he subordinates the individual case to some classification of diseases and some generic rule of treatment, he sinks to the level of the routine mechanic. His intelligence and his action become rigid, dogmatic, instead of free and flexible.

*Moral* goods and ends exist only when something has to be done. The fact that something has to be done proves that there are deficiencies, evils in the existent situation. This ill is just the specific ill that it is. It never is an exact duplicate of anything else. Consequently the good of the situation has to be discovered, projected and attained on the basis of the exact defect and trouble to be rectified. It cannot intelligently be injected into the situation from without. Yet it is the part of wisdom to compare different cases, to gather together the ills from which humanity suffers, and to generalize the corresponding goods into classes. Health, wealth, industry, temperance, amiability, courtesy, learning, esthetic capacity, initiative, courage, patience, enterprise, thoroughness and a multitude of other generalized ends are acknowledged as goods. But the *value* of this systematization is intellectual or analytic. Classifications *suggest* possible traits to be on the lookout for in studying a particular case; they suggest methods of action to be tried in removing the inferred causes of ill. They are tools of insight; their value is in promoting an individualized response in the individual situation.

Morals is not a catalogue of acts nor a set of rules to be applied like drugstore prescriptions or cook-book recipes. The need in morals is for specific methods of inquiry and of contrivance: Methods of inquiry to locate difficulties and evils; methods of contrivance to form plans to be used as working hypotheses in dealing with them. And the pragmatic import of the logic of individualized situations, each having its own irreplaceable good and principle, is to transfer the attention of theory from preoccupation with general conceptions to the problem of developing effective methods of inquiry.

Two ethical consequences of great moment should be remarked. The belief in fixed values has bred a division of ends into intrinsic and instrumental, of those that are really worth while in themselves and those that are of importance only as means to intrinsic goods. Indeed, it is often thought to be the very beginning of wisdom, of moral discrimination, to make this distinction. Dialectically, the distinction is interesting and seems harmless. But carried into practice it has an import that is tragic. Historically, it has been the source and justification of a hard and fast

difference between ideal goods on one side and material goods on the other. At present those who would be liberal conceive intrinsic goods as esthetic in nature rather than as exclusively religious or as intellectually contemplative. But the effect is the same. So-called intrinsic goods, whether religious or esthetic, are divorced from those interests of daily life which because of their constancy and urgency form the preoccupation of the great mass. Aristotle used this distinction to declare that slaves and the working class though they are necessary *for* the state—the commonweal—are not constituents *of* it. That which is regarded as *merely* instrumental must approach drudgery; it cannot command either intellectual, artistic or moral attention and respect. Anything becomes *unworthy* whenever it is thought of as intrinsically lacking worth. So men of “ideal” interests have chosen for the most part the way of neglect and escape. The urgency and pressure of “lower” ends have been covered up by polite conventions. Or, they have been relegated to a baser class of mortals in order that the few might be free to attend to the goods that are really or intrinsically worth while. This withdrawal, in the name of higher ends, has left, for mankind at large and especially for energetic “practical” people, the lower activities in complete command.

No one can possibly estimate how much of the obnoxious materialism and brutality of our economic life is due to the fact that economic ends have been regarded as *merely* instrumental. When they are recognized to be as intrinsic and final in their place as any others, then it will be seen that they are capable of idealization, and that if life is to be worth while, they must acquire ideal and intrinsic value. Esthetic, religious and other “ideal” ends are now thin and meagre or else idle and luxurious because of the separation from “instrumental” or economic ends. Only in connection with the latter can they be woven into the texture of daily life and made substantial and pervasive. The vanity and irresponsibility of values that are merely final and not also in turn means to the enrichment of other occupations of life ought to be obvious. But now the doctrine of “higher” ends gives aid, comfort and support to every socially isolated and socially irresponsible scholar, specialist, esthetic and religionist. It protects the vanity and irresponsibility of his calling from observation by others and by himself. The moral deficiency of the calling is transformed into a cause of admiration and gratulation.

The other generic change lies in doing away once for all with the traditional distinction between moral goods, like the virtues, and natural goods like health, economic security, art, science and the like. The point of view under discussion is not the only one which has deplored this rigid distinction and endeavored to abolish it. Some schools have even gone so far as to regard moral excellencies, qualities of character as of

value only because they promote natural goods. But the experimental logic when carried into morals makes every quality that is judged to be good according as it contributes to amelioration of existing ills. And in so doing, it enforces the moral meaning of natural science. When all is said and done in criticism of present social deficiencies, one may well wonder whether the root difficulty does not lie in the separation of natural and moral science. When physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, contribute to the detection of concrete human woes and to the development of plans for remedying them and relieving the human estate, they become moral; they become part of the apparatus of moral inquiry or science. The latter then loses its peculiar flavor of the didactic and pedantic; its ultra-moralistic and hortatory tone. It loses its thinness and shrillness as well as its vagueness. It gains agencies that are efficacious. But the gain is not confined to the side of moral science. Natural science loses its divorce from humanity; it becomes itself humanistic in quality. It is something to be pursued not in a technical and specialized way for what is called truth for its own sake, but with the sense of its social bearing, its intellectual indispensableness. It is technical only in the sense that it provides the technique of social and moral engineering.

When the consciousness of science is fully impregnated with the consciousness of human value, the greatest dualism which now weighs humanity down, the split between the material, the mechanical, the scientific and the moral and ideal will be destroyed. Human forces that now waver because of this division will be unified and reinforced. As long as ends are not thought of as individualized according to specific needs and opportunities, the mind will be content with abstractions, and the adequate stimulus to the moral or social use of natural science and historical data will be lacking. But when attention is concentrated upon the diversified concretes, recourse to all intellectual materials needed to clear up the special cases will be imperative. At the same time that morals are made to focus in intelligence, things intellectual are moralized. The vexatious and wasteful conflict between naturalism and humanism is terminated.

These general considerations may be amplified. First: Inquiry, discovery take the same place in morals that they have come to occupy in sciences of nature. Validation, demonstration become experimental, a matter of consequences. Reason, always an honorific term in ethics, becomes actualized in the methods by which the needs and conditions, the obstacles and resources of situations are scrutinized in detail, and intelligent plans of improvement are worked out. Remote and abstract generalities promote jumping at conclusions, "anticipations of nature." Bad consequences are then deplored as due to natural perversity and untoward



fate. But shifting the issue to analysis of a specific situation makes inquiry obligatory and alert observation of consequences imperative. No past decision nor old principle can ever be wholly relied upon to justify a course of action. No amount of pains taken in forming a purpose in a definite case is final; the consequences of its adoption must be carefully noted, and a purpose held only as a working hypothesis until results confirm its rightness. Mistakes are no longer either mere unavoidable accidents to be mourned or moral sins to be expiated and forgiven. They are lessons in wrong methods of using intelligence and instructions as to a better course in the future. They are indications of the need of revision, development, readjustment. Ends grow, standards of judgment are improved. Man is under just as much obligation to develop his most advanced standards and ideals as to use conscientiously those which he already possesses. Moral life is protected from falling into formalism and rigid repetition. It is rendered flexible, vital, growing.

In the second place, every case where moral action is required becomes of equal moral importance and urgency with every other. If the need and deficiencies of a specific situation indicate improvement of health as the end and good, then for that situation health is the ultimate and supreme good. It is no means to something else. It is a final and intrinsic value. The same thing is true of improvement of economic status, of making a living, of attending to business and family demands—all of the things which under the sanction of fixed ends have been rendered of secondary and merely instrumental value, and so relatively base and unimportant. Anything that in a given situation is an end and good at all is of equal worth, rank and dignity with every other good of any other situation, and deserves the same intelligent attention.

We note thirdly the effect in destroying the roots of Phariseeism. We are so accustomed to thinking of this as deliberate hypocrisy that we overlook its intellectual premises. The conception which looks for the end of action within the circumstances of the actual situation will not have the same measure of judgment for all cases. When one factor of the situation is a person of trained mind and large resources, more will be expected than with a person of backward mind and uncultured experience. The absurdity of applying the same standard of moral judgment to savage peoples that is used with civilized will be apparent. No individual or group will be judged by whether they come up to or fall short of some fixed result, but by the direction in which they are moving. The bad man is the man who no matter how good he *has* been is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who no matter how morally unworthy he *has* been is moving to become better. Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging

others. It excludes that arrogance which always accompanies judgment based on degree of approximation to fixed ends.

In the fourth place, the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing. Not health as an end fixed once and for all, but the needed improvement in health—a continual process—is the end and good. The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living. Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth and learning, are not goods to be possessed as they would be if they expressed fixed ends to be attained. They are directions of change in the quality of experience. Growth itself is the only moral "end."

Although the bearing of this idea upon the problem of evil and the controversy between optimism and pessimism is too vast to be here discussed, it may be worth while to touch upon it superficially. The problem of evil ceases to be a theological and metaphysical one, and is perceived to be the practical problem of reducing, alleviating, as far as may be removing, the evils of life. Philosophy is no longer under obligation to find ingenious methods of proving that evils are only apparent, not real, or to elaborate schemes for explaining them away or, worse yet, for justifying them. It assumes another obligation:—That of contributing in however humble a way to methods that will assist us in discovering the causes of humanity's ills. Pessimism is a paralyzing doctrine. In declaring that the world is evil wholesale, it makes futile all efforts to discover the remediable causes of specific evils and thereby destroys at the root every attempt to make the world better and happier. Wholesale optimism, which has been the consequence of the attempt to explain evil away, is, however, equally an incubus.

After all, the optimism that says that the world is already the best possible of all worlds might be regarded as the most cynical of pessimisms. If this is the best possible, what would a world which was fundamentally bad be like? Meliorism is the belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered. It encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions. It arouses confidence and a reasonable hopefulness as optimism does not. For the latter in declaring that good is already realized in ultimate reality tends to make us gloss over the evils that concretely exist. It becomes too readily the creed of those who live at ease, in comfort, of those who have been successful in obtaining this world's rewards. Too readily optimism

makes the men who hold it callous and blind to the sufferings of the less fortunate, or ready to find the cause of troubles of others in their personal viciousness. It thus co-operates with pessimism, in spite of the extreme nominal differences between the two, in benumbing sympathetic insight and intelligent effort in reform. It beckons men away from the world of relativity and change into the calm of the absolute and eternal.

The import of many of these changes in moral attitude focuses in the idea of happiness. Happiness has often been made the object of the moralists' contempt. Yet the most ascetic moralist has usually restored the idea of happiness under some other name, such as bliss. Goodness without happiness, valor and virtue without satisfaction, ends without conscious enjoyment—these things are as intolerable practically as they are self-contradictory in conception. Happiness is not, however, a bare possession; it is not a fixed attainment. Such a happiness is either the unworthy selfishness which moralists have so bitterly condemned, or it is, even if labelled bliss, an insipid tedium, a millennium of ease in relief from all struggle and labor. It could satisfy only the most delicate of mollicoddles. Happiness is found only in success; but success means succeeding, getting forward, moving in advance. It is an active process, not a passive outcome. Accordingly it includes the overcoming of obstacles, the elimination of sources of defect and ill. Esthetic sensitiveness and enjoyment are a large constituent in any worthy happiness. But the esthetic appreciation which is totally separated from renewal of spirit, from re-creation of mind and purification of emotion is a weak and sickly thing, destined to speedy death from starvation. That the renewal and recreation come unconsciously not by set intention but makes them the more genuine.

Upon the whole, utilitarianism has marked the best in the transition from the classic theory of ends and goods to that which is now possible. It had definite merits. It insisted upon getting away from vague generalities, and down to the specific and concrete. It subordinated law to human achievement instead of subordinating humanity to external law. It taught that institutions are made for man and not man for institutions; it actively promoted all issues of reform. It made moral good natural, humane, in touch with the natural goods of life. It opposed unearthly and other-worldly morality. Above all, it acclimatized in human imagination the idea of social welfare as a supreme test. But it was still profoundly affected in fundamental points by old ways of thinking. It never questioned the idea of a fixed, final and supreme end. It only questioned the current notions as to the nature of this end; and then inserted pleasure and the greatest possible aggregate of pleasures in the position of the fixed end.

Such a point of view treats concrete activities and specific interests not

as worth while in themselves, or as constituents of happiness, but as mere external means to getting pleasures. The upholders of the old tradition could therefore easily accuse utilitarianism of making not only virtue but art, poetry, religion and the state into mere servile means of attaining sensuous enjoyment. Since pleasure was an outcome, a result valuable on its own account independently of the active processes that achieve it, happiness was a thing to be possessed and held onto. The acquisitive instincts of man were exaggerated at the expense of the creative. Production was of importance not because of the intrinsic worth of invention and reshaping the world, but because its external results feed pleasure. Like every theory that sets up fixed and final aims, in making the end passive and possessive, it made all active operations *mere* tools. Labor was an unavoidable evil to be minimized. Security in possession was the chief thing practically. Material comfort and ease was magnified in contrast with the pains and risk of experimental creation.

These deficiencies, under certain conceivable conditions, might have remained merely theoretical. But the disposition of the times and the interests of those who propagated the utilitarian ideas, endowed them with power for social harm. In spite of the power of the new ideas in attacking old social abuses, there were elements in the teaching which operated or protected to sanction new social abuses. The reforming zeal was shown in criticism of the evils inherited from the class system of feudalism, evils economic, legal and political. But the new economic order of capitalism that was superseding feudalism brought its own social evils with it, and some of these ills utilitarianism tended to cover up or defend. The emphasis upon acquisition and possession of enjoyments took on an untoward color in connection with the contemporary enormous desire for wealth and the enjoyments it makes possible.

If utilitarianism did not actively promote the new economic materialism, it had no means of combating it. Its general spirit of subordinating productive activity to the bare product was indirectly favorable to the cause of an unadorned commercialism. In spite of its interest in a thoroughly social aim, utilitarianism fostered a new class interest, that of the capitalistic property-owning interests, provided only property was obtained through free competition and not by governmental favor. The stress that Bentham put on security tended to consecrate the legal institution of private property provided only certain legal abuses in connection with its acquisition and transfer were abolished. *Beati possidentes*—provided possessions had been obtained in accord with the rules of the competitive game—without, that is, extraneous favors from government. Thus utilitarianism gave intellectual confirmation to all those tendencies

which make "business" not a means of social service and an opportunity for personal growth in creative power but a way of accumulating the means of private enjoyment. Utilitarian ethics thus afford a remarkable example of the need of philosophic reconstruction which these lectures have been presenting. Up to a certain point, it reflected the meaning of modern thought and aspirations. But it was still tied down by fundamental ideas of that very order which it thought it had completely left behind: The idea of a fixed and single end lying beyond the diversity of human needs and acts rendered utilitarianism incapable of being an adequate representative of the modern spirit. It has to be reconstructed through emancipation from its inherited elements.

If a few words are added upon the topic of education, it is only for the sake of suggesting that the educative process is all one with the moral process, since the latter is a continuous passage of experience from worse to better. Education has been traditionally thought of as preparation: as learning, acquiring certain things because they will later be useful. The end is remote, and education is getting ready, is a preliminary to something more important to happen later on. Childhood is only a preparation for adult life, and adult life for another life. Always the future, not the present, has been the significant thing in education: Acquisition of knowledge and skill for future use and enjoyment; formation of habits required later in life in business, good citizenship and pursuit of science. Education is thought of also as something needed by some human beings merely because of their dependence upon others. We are born ignorant, unversed, unskilled, immature, and consequently in a state of social dependence. Instruction, training, moral discipline are processes by which the mature, the adult, gradually raise the helpless to the point where they can look out for themselves. The business of childhood is to grow into the independence of adulthood by means of the guidance of those who have already attained it. Thus the process of education as the main business of life ends when the young have arrived at emancipation from social dependence.

These two ideas, generally assumed but rarely explicitly reasoned out, contravene the conception that growing, or the continuous reconstruction of experience, is the only end. If at whatever period we choose to take a person, he is still in process of growth, then education is not, save as a by-product, a preparation for something coming later. Getting from the present the degree and kind of growth there is in it is education. This is a constant function, independent of age. The best thing that can be said about any special process of education, like that of the formal school period, is that it renders its subject capable of further education: more sensitive to conditions of growth and more able to take advantage of them.

Acquisition of skill, possession of knowledge, attainment of culture are not ends: they are marks of growth and means to its continuing.

The contrast usually assumed between the period of education as one of social dependence and of maturity as one of social independence does harm. We repeat over and over that man is a social animal, and then confine the significance of this statement to the sphere in which sociality usually seems least evident, politics. The heart of the sociality of man is in education. The idea of education as preparation and of adulthood as a fixed limit of growth are two sides of the same obnoxious untruth. If the moral business of the adult as well as the young is a growing and developing experience, then the instruction that comes from social dependencies and interdependencies is as important for the adult as for the child. Moral independence for the adult means arrest of growth, isolation means induration. We exaggerate the intellectual dependence of childhood so that children are too much kept in leading strings, and then we exaggerate the independence of adult life from intimacy of contacts and communication with others. When the identity of the moral process with the processes of specific growth is realized, the more conscious and formal education of childhood will be seen to be the most economical and efficient means of social advance and reorganization, and it will also be evident that the test of all the institutions of adult life is their effect in furthering continued education. Government, business, art, religion, all social institutions have a meaning, a purpose. That purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And this is all one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility. Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society.

## *The Marxist Ideology*

NO INTELLECTUAL movement can claim to have had a more profound impact upon the mind and actions of modern man than Marxism. Setting aside the many different things—for good or evil—that it has come to represent in contemporary life, Marxism is first and foremost a comprehensive and systematic world view. The system is all-pervasive; it manifests itself in such fields as economics, politics, ethics, sociology. But its root doctrine is what has come to be known as the materialist conception of history.

For our purposes here, it is sufficient merely to point out four of the essentials involved in Historical Materialism: (1) the economic structure characteristic of any (precommunist) society develops independently of human volition and reason, in accordance with immutable objective laws; (2) the development of this economic structure determines absolutely the character of every culture product in the society—law, religion, ethics, art, and the like; (3) the course of history is necessarily marked by revolutions, each of which announces the transition to a higher stage of historical development; and (4) man's slavery to man and to historical necessity will end only when the final proletarian revolution heralds the arrival of the communist society.

For a full understanding of the following selections drawn from the writings on Marx and Marxists, this general framework should be kept in mind. It will do much to explain the bases for the views set forth, as well as help toward understanding the direction of the Marxist program of action.

*SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING*

- ACTON, HARRY. *The Illusion of the Epoch*  
BERLIN, ISAIAH. *Karl Marx*  
CHILDE, GORDON. *What Is History?*  
COHEN, MORRIS. *The Faith of a Liberal*  
DEWEY, JOHN. *Freedom and Culture*  
ENGELS, FREDERICK. *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*  
FROMM, ERICH. *Marx's Concept of Man*  
HOOK, SIDNEY. *From Hegel to Marx*  
POPPER, KARL. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. II  
SCHUMPETER, JOSEPH A. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*



FREDERICK ENGELS

# Principles of Communism\*

## QUESTION 1. WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

*Answer.* Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.

## QUESTION 2. WHAT IS THE PROLETARIAT?

*Answer.* The proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose whole existence depends on the demand for labor, hence on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or the class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the nineteenth century.

## QUESTION 3. PROLETARIANS, THEN, HAVE NOT ALWAYS EXISTED?

*Answer.* No. There have always been poor and working classes; and the working classes have mostly been poor. But there have not always been workers and poor people living under conditions as they are today; in other words, there have not always been proletarians, any more than there has always been free unbridled competition.

## QUESTION 4. HOW DID THE PROLETARIAT ORIGINATE?

*Answer.* The proletariat originated in the industrial revolution which took place in England in the last half of the last [eighteenth] century, and which has since then been repeated in all the civilized countries of the world. This industrial revolution was precipitated by the discovery

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\* Reprinted by permission from a pamphlet published by The Monthly Review Press, pp. 5-18. The translation is by Paul M. Sweezy. First published 1847.

of the steam engine, various spinning machines, the mechanical loom, and a whole series of other mechanical devices. These machines, which were very expensive and hence could be bought only by big capitalists, altered the whole mode of production and displaced the former workers, because the machines turned out cheaper and better commodities than the workers could produce with their inefficient spinning wheels and handlooms. The machines delivered industry wholly into the hands of the big capitalists and rendered entirely worthless the meager property of the workers (tools, looms, etc.). The result was that the capitalists soon had everything in their hands and nothing remained to the workers. This marked the introduction of the factory system into the textile industry.

Once the impulse to the introduction of machinery and the factory system had been given, this system spread quickly to all other branches of industry, especially cloth- and book-printing, pottery, and the metal industries. Labor was more and more divided among the individual workers so that the worker who previously had done a complete piece of work now did only part of that piece. This division of labor made it possible to produce things faster and cheaper. It reduced the activity of the individual worker to simple, endlessly repeated mechanical motions which could be performed not only as well but much better by a machine. In this way, all these industries fell, one after another, under the dominance of steam, machinery, and the factory system, just as spinning and weaving had already done. But at the same time they also fell into the hands of big capitalists, and their workers were deprived of whatever independence remained to them. Gradually, not only genuine manufacture but also handicrafts came within the province of the factory system as big capitalists increasingly displaced the small master craftsmen by setting up huge workshops which saved many expenses and permitted an elaborate division of labor.

This is how it has come about that in civilized countries at the present time nearly all kinds of labor are performed in factories, and in nearly all branches of work handicrafts and manufacture have been superseded. This process has to an ever greater degree ruined the old middle class, especially the small handicraftsmen; it has entirely transformed the condition of the workers; and two new classes have been created which are gradually swallowing up all the others. These are:

(1) The class of big capitalists, who in all civilized countries are already in almost exclusive possession of all the means of subsistence and of the instruments (machines, factories) and materials necessary for the production of the means of subsistence. This is the bourgeois class, or the bourgeoisie.

(2) The class of the wholly propertyless, who are obliged to sell their labor to the bourgeoisie in order to get in exchange the means of subsistence necessary for their support. This is called the class of proletarians, or the proletariat.

**QUESTION 5. UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS DOES THIS SALE OF THE LABOR OF THE PROLETARIANS TO THE BOURGEOISIE TAKE PLACE?**

*Answer.* Labor is a commodity like any other and its price is therefore determined by exactly the same laws that apply to other commodities. In a regime of big industry or of free competition—as we shall see, the two come to the same thing—the price of a commodity is on the average always equal to its costs of production. Hence the price of labor is also equal to the costs of production of labor. But the costs of production of labor consist of precisely the quantity of means of subsistence necessary to enable the worker to continue working and to prevent the working class from dying out. The worker will therefore get no more for his labor than is necessary for this purpose; the price of labor or the wage will, in other words, be the lowest, the minimum, required for the maintenance of life. However, since business is sometimes better and sometimes worse, it follows that the worker sometimes gets more and sometimes less, just as the industrialist sometimes gets more and sometimes less for his commodities. But again, just as the industrialist, on the average of good times and bad, gets no more and no less for his commodities than what they cost, similarly on the average the worker gets no more and no less than this minimum. This economic law of wages operates the more strictly the greater the degree to which big industry has taken possession of all branches of production.

**QUESTION 6. WHAT WORKING CLASSES WERE THERE BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION?**

*Answer.* The working classes have always, according to the different stages of development of society, lived in different circumstances and had different relations to the owning and ruling classes. In antiquity, the workers were the *slaves* of the owners, just as they still are in many backward countries and even in the southern part of the United States. In the Middle Ages, they were the *serfs* of the landowning nobility, as they still are in Hungary, Poland, and Russia. In the Middle Ages, and indeed right up to the industrial revolution, there were also journeymen in the cities who worked in the service of petty bourgeois masters. Gradual-

ly, as manufacture developed, these journeymen became manufacturing workers who were even then employed by larger capitalists.

#### QUESTION 7. IN WHAT WAY DO PROLETARIANS DIFFER FROM SLAVES?

*Answer.* The slave is sold once and for all; the proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly. The individual slave, property of one master, is assured an existence, however miserable it may be, because of the master's interest. The individual proletarian, property as it were of the entire bourgeois class which buys his labor only when someone has need of it, has not secure existence. This existence is assured only to the *class* as a whole. The slave is outside competition; the proletarian is in it and experiences all its vagaries. The slave counts as a thing, not as a member of civil society; the proletarian is recognized as a person, as a member of civil society. Thus the slave can have a better existence than the proletarian, while the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of social development and himself stands on a higher social level than the slave. The slave frees himself when, of all the relations of private property, he abolishes only the relation of slavery and thereby becomes a proletarian; the proletarian can free himself only by abolishing private property in general.

#### QUESTION 8. IN WHAT WAY DO PROLETARIANS DIFFER FROM SERFS?

*Answer.* The serf possesses and uses an instrument of production, a piece of land, in exchange for which he gives up a part of his product or part of the services of his labor. The proletarian works with the instruments of production of another, for the account of this other, in exchange for a part of the product. The serf gives up, the proletarian receives. The serf has an assured existence, the proletarian has not. The serf is outside competition, the proletarian is in it. The serf liberates himself in one of three ways: either he runs away to the city and there becomes a handicraftsman; or, instead of products and services, he gives money to his lord and thereby becomes a free tenant; or he overthrows his feudal lord and himself becomes a property-owner. In short, by one route or another he gets into the owning class and enters into competition. The proletarian liberates himself by abolishing competition, private property, and all class differences.

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**QUESTION 10. IN WHAT WAY DO PROLETARIANS DIFFER FROM MANUFACTURING WORKERS?**

*Answer.* The manufacturing worker of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries still had, with but few exceptions, an instrument of production in his own possession—his loom, the family spinning wheel, a little plot of land which he cultivated in his spare time. The proletarian has none of these things. The manufacturing worker almost always lives in the countryside and in a more or less patriarchal relation to his landlord or employer; the proletarian lives for the most part in the city and his relation to his employer is purely a cash relation. The manufacturing worker is torn out of his patriarchal relation by big industry, loses whatever property he still has, and in this way becomes a proletarian.

**QUESTION 11. WHAT WERE THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND OF THE DIVISION OF SOCIETY INTO BOURGEOISIE AND PROLETARIAT?**

*Answer.* *First*, the lower and lower prices of industrial products brought about by machine labor totally destroyed in all countries of the world the old system of manufacture or industry based upon hand labor. In this way, all semi-barbarian countries, which had hitherto been more or less strangers to historical development and whose industry had been based on manufacture, were violently forced out of their isolation. They bought the cheaper commodities of the English and allowed their own manufacturing workers to be ruined. Countries which had known no progress for thousands of years, for example India, were thoroughly revolutionized, and even China is now on the way to a revolution. We have come to the point where a new machine invented in England deprives millions of Chinese workers of their livelihood within a year's time. In this way big industry has brought all the people of the earth into contact with each other, has merged all local markets into one world market, has spread civilization and progress everywhere and has thus ensured that whatever happens in the civilized countries will have repercussions in all other countries. It follows that if the workers in England or France now liberate themselves, this must set off revolutions in all other countries—revolutions which sooner or later must accomplish the liberation of their respective working classes.

*Second*, wherever big industries displaced manufacture, the bourgeoisie developed in wealth and power to the utmost and made itself the first class of the country. The result was that wherever this happened

the bourgeoisie took political power into its own hands and displaced the hitherto ruling classes, the aristocracy, the guildmasters, and their representative, the absolute monarchy. The bourgeoisie annihilated the power of the aristocracy, the nobility, by abolishing the entailment of estates, in other words by making landed property subject to purchase and sale, and by doing away with the special privileges of the nobility. It destroyed the power of the guildmasters by abolishing guilds and handicraft privileges. In their place, it put competition, that is, a state of society in which everyone has the right to enter into any branch of industry, the only obstacle being a lack of the necessary capital. The introduction of free competition is thus a public declaration that from now on the members of society are unequal only to the extent that their capitals are unequal, that capital is the decisive power, and that therefore the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, have become the first class in society. Free competition is necessary for the establishment of big industry, because it is the only condition of society in which big industry can make its way. Having destroyed the social power of the nobility and the guildmasters, the bourgeoisie also destroyed their political power. Having raised itself to the actual position of first class in society, it proclaims itself to be also the dominant political class. This it does through the introduction of the representative system which rests on bourgeois equality before the law and the recognition of free competition, and in European countries takes the form of constitutional monarchy. In these constitutional monarchies, only those who possess a certain capital are voters, that is to say, only members of the bourgeoisie. These bourgeois voters choose the deputies, and these bourgeois deputies, by using their right to refuse to vote taxes, choose a bourgeois government.

*Third*, everywhere the proletariat develops in step with the bourgeoisie. In proportion as the bourgeoisie grows in wealth the proletariat grows in numbers. For, since proletarians can be employed only by capital, and since capital expands only through employing labor, it follows that the proletariat proceeds at precisely the same pace as the growth of capital. Simultaneously, this process draws members of the bourgeoisie and proletarians together into the great cities where industry can be carried on most profitably, and by thus throwing great masses in one spot it gives to the proletarians a consciousness of their own strength. Moreover, the further this process advances, the more new labor-saving machines are invented, the greater is the pressure exercised by big industry on wages, which, as we have seen, sink to their minimum and therewith render the condition of the proletariat increasingly unbearable. The growing dissatisfaction of the proletariat thus joins with its rising power to prepare a proletarian social revolution.

**QUESTION 12. WHAT WERE THE FURTHER CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION?**

*Answer.* Big industry created in the steam engine and other machines the means of endlessly expanding industrial production, speeding it up, and cutting its costs. With production thus facilitated, the free competition which is necessarily bound up with big industry assumed the most extreme forms; a multitude of capitalists invaded industry, and in a short while more was produced than was needed. As a consequence, finished commodities could not be sold, and a so-called commercial crisis broke out. Factories had to be closed, their owners went bankrupt, and the workers were without bread. Deepest misery reigned everywhere. After a time, the superfluous products were sold, the factories began to operate again, wages rose, and gradually business got better than ever. But it was not long before too many commodities were again produced and a new crisis broke out, only to follow the same course as its predecessor. Ever since the beginning of this [nineteenth] century, the condition of industry has constantly fluctuated between periods of prosperity and periods of crisis; nearly every five to seven years a fresh crisis has intervened, always with the greatest hardship for workers, and always accompanied by general revolutionary stirrings and the direst peril to the whole existing order of things.

**QUESTION 13. WHAT FOLLOWS FROM THESE PERIODIC COMMERCIAL CRISES?**

*Answer. First:* That though big industry in its earliest stage created free competition, it has now outgrown free competition; that for big industry competition and generally the individualistic organization of production have become a fetter which it must and will shatter; that so long as big industry remains on its present footing it can be maintained only at the cost of general chaos every seven years, each time threatening the whole of civilization and not only plunging the proletarians into misery but also ruining large sections of the bourgeoisie; hence either that big industry must itself be given up, which is an absolute impossibility, or that it makes unavoidably necessary an entirely new organization of society in which production is no longer directed by mutually competing individual industrialists but rather by the whole society operating according to a definite plan and taking account of the needs of all.

*Second:* That big industry and the limitless expansion of production which it makes possible bring within the range of feasibility a social order in which so much is produced that every member of society will be in a position to exercise and develop all his powers and faculties in

complete freedom. It thus appears that the very qualities of big industry which in our present-day society produce misery and crises are those which in a different form of society will abolish this misery and these catastrophic depressions. We see with the greatest clarity:

(1) That all these evils are from now on to be ascribed solely to a social order which no longer corresponds to the requirements of the real situation; and

(2) That it is possible, through a new social order, to do away with these evils altogether.

#### QUESTION 14. WHAT WILL THIS NEW SOCIAL ORDER HAVE TO BE LIKE?

*Answer.* Above all, it will have to take the control of industry and of all branches of production out of the hands of mutually competing individuals, and instead institute a system in which all these branches of production are operated by society as a whole, that is, for the common account, according to a common plan, and with the participation of all members of society. It will, in other words, abolish competition and replace it with association. Moreover, since the management of industry by individuals necessarily implies private property, and since competition is in reality merely the manner and form in which the control of industry by private property owners expresses itself, it follows that private property cannot be separated from competition and the individual management of industry. Private property must therefore be abolished and in its place must come the common utilization of all instruments of production and the distribution of all products according to common agreement—in a word, what is called the communal ownership of goods. In fact, the abolition of private property is doubtless the shortest and most significant way to characterize the revolution in the whole social order which has been made necessary by the development of industry, and for this reason it is rightly advanced by communists as their main demand.

#### QUESTION 15. WAS NOT THE ABOLITION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY POSSIBLE AT AN EARLIER TIME?

*Answer.* No. Every change in the social order, every revolution in property relations, is the necessary consequence of the creation of new forces of production which no longer fit into the old property relations. Private property itself originated in this way. For private property has not always existed. When, towards the end of the Middle Ages, there arose a new mode of production which could not be carried on under then existing feudal and guild forms of property, this manufacture,



which had outgrown the old property relations, created a new property form, private property. And for manufacture and the earliest stage of development of big industry, private property was the only possible property form; the social order based on it was the only possible social order. So long as it is not possible to produce so much that there is enough for all, with more left over for expanding the social capital and extending the forces of production—so long as this is not possible, there must always be a ruling class directing the use of society's productive forces, and a poor, oppressed class. How these classes are constituted depends on the stage of development. The agrarian Middle Ages give us the baron and the serf; the cities of the later Middle Ages show us the guildmaster and the journeyman and the day laborer; the seventeenth century has its manufacturers and manufacturing workers; the nineteenth has big factory owners and proletarians. It is clear that up to now the forces of production have never been developed to the point where enough could be produced for all, and that private property has become a fetter and a barrier in relation to the further development of the forces of production. Now, however, the development of big industry has ushered in a new period. Capital and the forces of production have been expanded to an unprecedented extent, and the means are at hand to multiply them without limit in the near future. Moreover, the forces of production have been concentrated in the hands of a few bourgeois, while the great mass of the people are more and more falling into the proletariat, their situation becoming more wretched and intolerable in proportion to the increase of wealth of the bourgeoisie. And finally, these mighty and easily extended forces of production have so far outgrown private property and the bourgeoisie that they threaten at any moment to unleash the most violent disturbances of the social order. Now, under these conditions, the abolition of private property has become not only possible but absolutely necessary.

**QUESTION 16. WILL THE PEACEFUL ABOLITION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY BE POSSIBLE?**

*Answer.* It would be desirable if this could happen, and the communists would certainly be the last to oppose it. Communists know only too well that all conspiracies are not only useless but even harmful. They know all too well that revolutions are not made intentionally and arbitrarily, but that everywhere and always they have been the necessary consequence of conditions which were wholly independent of the will and direction of individual parties and entire classes. But they also see that the development of the proletariat in nearly all civilized countries has been violently suppressed, and that in this way the opponents of

communism have been working toward a revolution with all their strength. If the oppressed proletariat is finally driven to revolution, then we communists will defend the interest of the proletarians with deed as we now defend them with words.

**QUESTION 17. WILL IT BE POSSIBLE FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY TO BE ABOLISHED AT ONE STROKE?**

*Answer.* No, no more than existing forces of production can at one stroke be multiplied to the extent necessary for the creation of a communal society. In all probability, the proletarian revolution will transform existing society gradually and will be able to abolish private property only when the means of production are available in sufficient quantity.

**QUESTION 18. WHAT WILL BE THE COURSE OF THIS REVOLUTION?**

*Answer.* Above all, it will establish a *democratic constitution* and through this the direct or indirect dominance of the proletariat. Direct in England, where the proletarians are already a majority of the people. Indirect in France and Germany, where the majority of the people consists not only of proletarians but also of small peasants and petty bourgeois who are in the process of falling into the proletariat, who are more and more dependent in all their political interests on the proletariat, and who must therefore soon adapt themselves to the demands of the proletariat. Perhaps this will cost a second struggle, but the outcome can only be the victory of the proletariat.

Democracy would be wholly valueless to the proletariat if it were not immediately used as a means for putting through measures directed against private property and ensuring the livelihood of the proletariat. The main measures, emerging as the necessary result of existing relations, are the following:

(1) Limitation of private property through progressive taxation, heavy inheritance taxes, abolition of inheritance through collateral lines (brothers, nephews, etc.), forced loans, etc.

(2) Gradual expropriation of landowners, industrialists, railroad magnates and shipowners, partly through competition by state industry, partly directly through compensation in the form of bonds.

(3) Confiscation of the possessions of all emigrants and rebels against the majority of the people.

(4) Organization of labor or employment of proletarians on publicly owned land, in factories and workshops, with competition among the workers being abolished and with the factory owners, insofar as they still exist, being obliged to pay the same high wages as those paid by the state.

(5) An equal obligation on all members of society to work until such time as private property has been completely abolished. Formation of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

(6) Centralization of money and credit in the hands of the state through a national bank operating with state capital, and the suppression of all private banks and bankers.

(7) Expansion of the number of national factories, workshops, railroads, ships; bringing new lands into cultivation and improvement of land already under cultivation—all in proportion to the growth of the capital and labor force at the disposal of the nation.

(8) Education of all children, from the moment they can leave their mothers' care, in national establishments at national cost. Education and production together.

(9) Construction, on public lands, of great palaces as communal dwellings for associated groups of citizens engaged in both industry and agriculture and combining in their way of life the advantages of urban and rural condition while avoiding the one-sidedness and drawbacks of each.

(10) Destruction of all unhealthy and jerry-built dwellings in urban districts.

(11) Equal inheritance rights for children born in and out of wedlock.

(12) Concentration of all means of transportation in the hands of the nation.

It is impossible, of course, to carry out all these measures at once. But one will always bring others in its wake. Once the first radical attack on private property has been launched, the proletariat will find itself forced to go ever further, to concentrate increasingly in the hands of the state all capital, all agriculture, all transport, all trade. All the foregoing measures are directed to this end; and they will become practicable and feasible, capable of producing their centralizing effects to precisely the degree that the proletariat through its labor multiplies the country's productive forces. Finally, when all capital, all production, all exchange have been brought together in the hands of the nation, private property will disappear of its own accord, money will become superfluous, and production will so expand and man so change that society will be able to slough off whatever of its old economic habits may remain.

**QUESTION 19.** WILL IT BE POSSIBLE FOR THIS REVOLUTION TO TAKE PLACE IN ONE COUNTRY ALONE?

*Answer.* No. By creating the world market, big industry has already brought all the peoples of the earth, and especially the civilized peoples,

into such close relation with one another that none is independent of what happens to the others. Further, it has co-ordinated the social development of the civilized countries to such an extent that in all of them bourgeoisie and proletariat have become the decisive classes and the struggle between them the great struggle of the day. It follows that the communist revolution will be not merely a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilized countries, that is to say, at least in England, America, France, and Germany. It will develop in each of these countries more or less rapidly according as one country or the other has a more developed industry, greater wealth, a more significant mass of productive forces. Hence it will go slowest and will meet most obstacles in Germany, most rapidly and with the fewest difficulties in England. It will have a powerful impact on the other countries of the world and will radically alter the course of development which they have followed up to now, while greatly stepping up its pace. It is a universal revolution and will accordingly have a universal range.

**QUESTION 20. WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ULTIMATE DISAPPEARANCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY?**

*Answer.* Society will take all forces of production and means of commerce, as well as the exchange and distribution of products, out of the hands of private capitalists and will manage them in accordance with a plan based on the availability of resources and the needs of the whole society. In this way, most important of all, the evil consequences which are now associated with the conduct of big industry will be abolished. There will be no more crises; the expanded production, which for the present order of society is overproduction and hence a prevailing cause of misery, will then be insufficient and in need of being expanded much further. Instead of generating misery, overproduction will reach beyond the elementary requirements of society to assure the satisfaction of the needs of all; it will create new needs and at the same time the means of satisfying them. It will become the condition of and the stimulus to new progress which will no longer throw the whole social order into confusion, as progress has always done in the past. Big industry, freed from the pressure of private property, will undergo such an expansion that what we now see will seem as petty in comparison as manufacture seems when put beside the big industry of our own day. This development of industry will make available to society a sufficient mass of products to satisfy the needs of everyone. The same will be true of agriculture, which also suffers from the pressure of private property and is held back by the division of privately owned land into small parcels. Here existing improvements and scientific procedures will be put into practice, with a resulting

leap forward which will assure to society all the products it needs. In this way such an abundance of goods will be produced that society will be able to satisfy the needs of all its members. The division of society into different, mutually hostile classes will then become unnecessary. Indeed, it will be not only unnecessary but intolerable in the new social order. The existence of classes originated in the division of labor, and the division of labor as it has been known up to the present will completely disappear. For mechanical and chemical processes are not enough to bring industrial and agricultural production up to the level we have described; the capacities of the men who make use of these processes must undergo a corresponding development. Just as the peasants and manufacturing workers of the last century changed their whole way of life and became quite different people when they were impressed into big industry, in the same way communal control over production by society as a whole and the resulting new development will both require an entirely different kind of human material. People will no longer be, as they are today, subordinated to a single branch of production, bound to it, exploited by it; they will no longer develop one of their faculties at the expense of all others; they will no longer know only one branch, or one branch of a single branch, of production as a whole. Even industry as it is today is finding such people less and less useful. Industry controlled by society as a whole and operated according to a plan presupposes well-rounded human beings, their faculties developed in balanced fashion, able to see the system of production in its entirety. The form of the division of labor which makes one a peasant, another a cobbler, a third a factory worker, a fourth a stock-market operator has already been undermined by machinery and will completely disappear. Education will enable young people quickly to familiarize themselves with the whole system of production and to pass from one branch of production to another in response to the needs of society or their own inclinations. It will therefore free them from the one-sided character which the present-day division of labor impresses upon every individual. Communist society will in this way make it possible for its members to put their comprehensively developed faculties to full use. But when this happens classes will necessarily disappear. It follows that society organized on a communist basis is incompatible with the existence of classes on the one hand, and that the very building of such a society provides the means of abolishing class differences on the other.

A corollary of this is that the difference between city and country is destined to disappear. The management of agriculture and industry by the same people rather than by two different classes of people is, if only for purely material reasons, a necessary condition of communist association.

The dispersal of the agricultural population on the land alongside the crowding of the industrial population into the great cities is a condition which corresponds to an undeveloped state of both agriculture and industry and can already be felt as an obstacle to further development.

The general cooperation of all members of society for the purpose of planned exploitation of the forces of production, the expansion of production to the point where it will satisfy the needs of all, the abolition of a situation in which the needs of some are satisfied at the expense of the needs of others, the complete liquidation of classes and their conflicts, the rounded development of the capacities of all members of society through the elimination of the present division of labor, through industrial education, through engaging in varying activities, through the participation by all in the the enjoyments produced by all, through the combination of city and country—these are the main consequences of the abolition of private property.

*QUESTION 21.* WHAT WILL BE THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY ON THE FAMILY?

*Answer.* It will transform the relations between the sexes into a purely private matter which concerns only the persons involved and into which society has no occasion to intervene. It can do this since it does away with private property and educates children on a communal basis, and in this way removes the two bases of traditional marriage, the dependence, rooted in private property, of the woman on the man and of the children on the parents. And here is the answer to the outcry of the highly moral philistines against the "community of women." Community of women is a condition which belongs entirely to bourgeois society and which today finds its complete expression in prostitution. But prostitution is based on private property and falls with it. Thus communist society, instead of introducing community of women, in fact abolishes it.

# Morality and Law. Eternal Truths\*

WE REFRAIN from giving samples of the mish-mash of platitudes and oracular sayings, in a word, of the simple *balderdash*, with which Herr Dühring regales his readers for fifty full pages as the deep-rooted science of the elements of consciousness. We will cite only this: "The person who can only think by means of language has never yet learnt what is meant by *abstract* and *pure* thought." On this basis animals are the most abstract and purest thinkers, because their thought is never obscured by the officious intrusion of language. In any case one can see from the Dühringian thoughts and the language in which they are expressed how little suited these thoughts are to any language, and how little suited the German language is to these thoughts.

At last the fourth section is reached, and we are saved; apart from the liquefying pap of rhetoric, it does at least offer us, here and there, something tangible on the subject of *morality* and law. Right at the outset, on this occasion, we are invited to take a trip to the other celestial bodies: the elements of morality "must occur in concordant fashion among all non-human beings whose active reason has to deal with the conscious ordering of life impulses in the form of instincts. . . . And yet our interest in such deductions will remain small. . . . Nevertheless it always remains an idea which *beneficently extends* our range of vision, when we think that on other celestial bodies the life of the individuals and of the community must be based on a scheme which . . . is unable to abrogate or escape from the general fundamental constitution of a rationally acting being."

In this case, by way of exception, the validity of the Dühringian truths

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\* From *Anti-Dühring*, by Frederick Engels, pp. 94-105, 124-126. Copyright by International Publishers, 1939. Reprinted by permission. First published 1878.

also for all other possible worlds is put at the beginning instead of the end of the chapter concerned; and for a very good reason. If the validity of the Dühringian conceptions of morals and justice is first established for all *worlds*, it is all the more easy to beneficently extend their validity to all *times*. But once again what is involved is nothing less than final and ultimate truth. The moral world "just as much as the world of knowledge in general," has "its permanent principles and simple elements." The moral principles stand "above history and above the present difference in national characteristics. . . . The special truth out of which, in the course of evolution, the more complete moral consciousness and, so to speak, conscience are built up, in so far as their ultimate basis is understood, may claim a validity and range similar to the concepts and applications of mathematics. *Pure truths are absolutely immutable* . . . so that it is altogether a stupidity to think that the validity of knowledge is something that can be affected by time and changes in reality." Hence the certitude of exact knowledge and the adequacy of more common cognition leave no room, when we reflect, for doubting the absolute validity of the principles of knowledge. "Even persistent doubt is itself a diseased condition of weakness and only the expression of *sterile confusion*, which sometimes seeks to maintain the appearance of something stable in the systematic consciousness of its *nothingness*. In the sphere of morals, the denial of general principles clutches at the geographical and historical variety of customs and principles, and if one concedes the inevitable necessity of moral wickedness and evil, it believes that it has then all the more got beyond the recognition of the real validity and actual efficacy of concordant moral instincts. This *mordant scepticism*, which is not only directed against particular false doctrines but against mankind's capacity to develop conscious morality, resolves itself ultimately into a real Nothing, in fact into something that is worse than mere nihilism. . . . It flatters itself that it can easily dominate within its *confused chaos* of dissolved moral ideas and open the gates to unprincipled caprice. But it makes a gross error in this: for mere reference even to the inevitable fate of the mind when it is concerned with error and truth suffices to show by this analogy alone that the natural law of fallibility does not necessarily exclude the attainment of accuracy."

Up to now we have calmly put up with all these pompous phrases of Herr Dühring's about final and ultimate truths, the sovereignty of thought, absolute certainty of knowledge, and so forth, because it is only at the point which we have now reached that the matter can be brought to a head. Up to this point it has been enough to enquire how far the separate assertions of the philosophy of reality had "sovereign validity" and "unconditional claim to truth"; now we come to the question whether



any, and if so which, products of human knowledge ever can have sovereign validity, and an unconditional claim to truth. When I say "of human knowledge" I do not use the phrase with the intention of insulting the inhabitants of other celestial bodies, whom I have not had the pleasure of knowing, but only for the reason that animals also have knowledge, though it is in no way sovereign. To a dog his master is divine, though this master may be the biggest scoundrel on earth.

Is human thought sovereign? Before we can answer yes or no we must first enquire: what is human thought? Is it the thought of the individual human being? No. But it exists only as the individual thought of many billions of past, present and future men. If then, I say that the total thought of all these human beings, including future ones, which is embraced in my idea, is *sovereign*, able to know the world as it exists, if only mankind lasts long enough and in so far as no limits are imposed on its knowledge by its perceptive organs or the objects to be known, then I am saying something which is pretty banal and, in addition, pretty barren. For the most valuable result from it would be that it should make us extremely distrustful of our present knowledge, inasmuch as in all probability we are but little beyond the beginning of human history, and the generations which will put *us* right are likely to be far more numerous than those whose knowledge we—often enough with a considerable degree of contempt—are in a position to correct.

Herr Dühring himself declares that consciousness, and therefore also thought and knowledge, of necessity can only become manifest in a number of individual beings. We can only ascribe sovereignty to the thought of each of these individuals in so far as we are not aware of any power which would be able to impose any idea forcibly on him, when he is of sound mind and wide awake. But as for the sovereign validity of the knowledge in each individual's mind, we all know that there can be no talk of such a thing, and that all previous experience shows that without exception such knowledge always contains much more that is capable of being improved upon than that which cannot be improved upon or is correct.

In other words, the sovereignty of thought is realised in a number of extremely unsovereignly-thinking human beings; the knowledge which has an unconditional claim to truth is realised in a number of relative errors; neither the one nor the other can be fully realised except through an endless eternity of human existence.

Here once again we find the same contradiction as we found above, between the character of human thought, necessarily conceived as absolute, and its reality in individual human beings with their extremely limited thought. This is a contradiction which can only be solved in the

infinite progression, or what is for us, at least from a practical standpoint, the endless succession, of generations of mankind. In this sense human thought is just as much sovereign as not sovereign, and its capacity for knowledge just as much unlimited as limited. It is sovereign and unlimited in its disposition, its vocation, its possibilities and its historical goal; it is not sovereign and it is limited in its individual expression and in its realisation at each particular moment.

It is just the same with eternal truths. If mankind ever reached the stage at which it could only work with eternal truths, with conclusions of thought which possess sovereign validity and an unconditional claim to truth, it would then have reached the point where the infinity of the intellectual world, both in its actuality and in its potentiality had been exhausted, and this would mean that the famous miracle of the infinite series which has been counted would have been performed.

But in spite of all this, are there any truths which are so securely based that any doubt of them seems to us to amount to insanity? That twice two makes four, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, that Paris is in France, that a man who gets no food dies of hunger, and so forth? Are there then nevertheless *eternal* truths, final and ultimate truths?

Certainly there are. We can divide the whole realm of knowledge in the traditional way into three great departments. The first includes all sciences which are concerned with inanimate Nature and are to a greater or less degree susceptible of mathematical treatment: mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, physics, chemistry. If it gives anyone any pleasure to use mighty words for very simple things, it can be asserted that *certain* results obtained by these sciences are eternal truths, final and ultimate truths; for which reason these sciences are also known as the *exact* sciences. But very far from all their results have this validity. With the introduction of variable magnitudes and the extension of their variability to the infinitely small and infinitely large, mathematics, in other respects so strictly moral, fell from grace; it ate of the tree of knowledge, which opened up to it a career of most colossal achievements, but at the same time a path of error. The virgin state of absolute validity and irrefutable certainty of everything mathematical was gone forever; mathematics entered the realm of controversy, and we have reached the point where most people differentiate and integrate not because they understand what they are doing but from pure faith, because up to now it has always come out right. Things are even worse with astronomy and mechanics, and in physics and chemistry we are surrounded by hypotheses as by a swarm of bees. And it must of necessity be so. In physics we are dealing with the motion of molecules, in chemistry with the formation of molecules

out of atoms, and if the interference of light waves is not a myth, we have absolutely no prospect of ever seeing these interesting objects with our own eyes. As time goes on, final and ultimate truths become remarkably rare in this field.

We are even worse off for them in geology, which by its nature is concerned chiefly with events which took place not only in our absence but in the absence of any human being whatever. The winning of final and absolute truths in this field is therefore a very troublesome business, and the crop is extremely meagre.

The second department of science is the one which covers the investigation of living organisms. In this field there is such a multitude of reciprocal relations and causalities that not only does the solution of each question give rise to a host of other questions, but each separate problem can usually only be solved piecemeal, through a series of investigations which often requires centuries to complete; and even then the need for a systematic presentation of the interrelations makes it necessary again and again to surround the final and ultimate truths with a luxuriant growth of hypotheses. What a long series of intermediaries from Galen to Malpighi was necessary for correctly establishing such a simple matter as the circulation of the blood in mammals, how slight is our knowledge of the origin of blood corpuscles, and how numerous are the missing links even today, for example, in our attempts to bring the symptoms of a disease into some rational relationship with its causes! And often enough discoveries, such as that of the cell, are made which compel us to revise completely all formerly established final and ultimate truths in the realm of biology, and to put whole piles of them on the scrap heap once and for all. Anyone who wants to establish really pure and immutable truths in this science will therefore have to be content with such platitudes as: all men are mortal, all female mammals have lacteal glands, and the like; he will not even be able to assert that the higher mammals digest with their stomach and intestines and not with their heads, for the nervous activity which is centralised in the head is indispensable to digestion.

But eternal truths are in an even worse plight in the third, the historical group of sciences. The subjects investigated by these in their historical sequence and in their present forms are the conditions of human life, social relationships, forms of law and the state, with their ideal superstructure of philosophy, religion, art, etc. In organic nature we are at least dealing with a succession of phenomena which, so far as our immediate observation is concerned, recur with fair regularity between very wide limits. Organic species have on the whole remained unchanged since the time of Aristotle. In social history, however, the repetition of

conditions is the exception and not the rule, once we pass beyond the primitive stage of man, the so-called Stone Age; and when such repetitions occur, they never arise under exactly similar conditions—as for example the existence of an original common ownership of the land among all civilised peoples, and the way in which this came to an end. In the realm of human history our knowledge is therefore even more backward than in the realm of biology. Furthermore, when by way of exception the inner connection between the social and political forms of existence in an epoch come to be recognized, this as a rule only occurs when those forms are already out of date and are nearing extinction. Therefore, knowledge is here essentially relative, inasmuch as it is limited to the perception of relationships and consequences of certain social and state forms which exist only at a particular epoch and among particular people and are of their very nature transitory. Anyone therefore who sets out on this field to hunt down final and ultimate truths, truths which are pure and absolutely immutable, will bring home but little, apart from platitudes and commonplaces of the sorriest kind—for example, that generally speaking man cannot live except by labour; that up to the present mankind for the most part has been divided into rulers and ruled; that Napoleon died on May 5, 1821, and so on.

Now it is a remarkable thing that it is precisely in this sphere that we most frequently encounter truths which claim to be eternal, final and ultimate and all the rest of it. That twice two make four, that birds have beaks, and similar statements, are proclaimed as eternal truths only by those who aim at deducing, from the existence of eternal truths in general, the conclusion that there are also eternal truths in the sphere of human history—eternal morality, eternal justice, and so on—which claim a validity and scope equal to those of the truths and deductions of mathematics. And then we can confidently rely on this same friend of humanity taking the first opportunity to assure us that all previous fabricators of eternal truths have been to a greater or lesser degree asses and charlatans, that they have all fallen into error and made mistakes; but that *their* error and *their* fallibility has been in accordance with natural law, and prove the existence of truth and accuracy *in his case*; and that he, the prophet who has now arisen, has in his bag, all ready made, final and ultimate truth, eternal morality and eternal justice. This has all happened so many hundreds and thousand of times that we can only feel astonished that there should still be people credulous enough to believe this, not of others, but of themselves. Nevertheless we have here before us at least another such prophet, who also, quite in the accustomed way, flies into highly moral indignation when other people deny that any individual whatsoever is in a position to hand out to us the final and ultimate truth.

Such a denial, or indeed mere doubt of it, is weakness, sterile confusion, nothingness, mordant criticism, worse than nihilism, incoherent chaos and other such pleasantries. As with all prophets, instead of critical and scientific examination and judgment we get moral condemnation out of hand.

We might have made mention above of the sciences which investigate the laws of human thought, *i.e.*, logic and dialectics. In these, however, we do not fare any better as regards eternal truths. Herr Dühring declares that dialectics proper is pure nonsense, and the many books which have been and in the future will be written on logic provide abundant proof that also in this science final and ultimate truths are much more sparsely sown than is commonly believed.

For that matter, there is absolutely no need to be alarmed at the fact that the stage of knowledge with we have now reached is as little final as all that have preceded it. It already embraces a vast mass of facts and requires very great specialisation of study on the part of anyone who wants to become an expert in any particular science. But a man who applies the measure of pure, immutable, final and ultimate truth to knowledge which, by the very nature of its object, must either remain relative for long successions of generations and be completed only step by step, or which, as in cosmogony, geology and the history of man, must always remain defective and incomplete because of the faultiness of the historical material—such a man only proves thereby his own ignorance and perversity, even if the real background to his pretensions is not, as it is in this case, his claim to personal infallibility. Truth and error, like all concepts which are expressed in polar opposites, have absolute validity only in an extremely limited field, as we have just seen, and as even Herr Dühring would realise if he had any acquaintance with the first elements of dialectics, which deal precisely with the inadequacy of all polar opposites. As soon as we apply the antithesis between truth and error outside of that narrow field which has been referred to above it becomes relative and therefore unserviceable for exact scientific modes of expression; and if we attempt to apply it as absolutely valid outside that field we then really find ourselves beaten: both poles of the antithesis become transformed into their opposites, truth becomes error and error truth. Let us take as an example the well-known Boyle's law, by which, if the temperature remains constant, the volume of gases varies inversely with the pressure to which they are subjected. Regnault found that this law did not hold good in certain cases. Had he been a philosopher of reality he would have had to say: Boyle's law is mutable, and is therefore not a pure truth, therefore it is not a truth at all, therefore it is an error. But had he done this he would have committed an error far greater than the

one that was contained in Boyle's law; his grain of truth would have been lost sight of in a sandhill of error; he would have distorted his originally correct conclusion into an error compared with which Boyle's law, along with the little particle of error that clings to it, would have seemed like truth. But Regnault, being a man of science, did not indulge in such childishness, but continued his investigations and discovered that Boyle's law is in general only approximately correct, and in particular loses its validity in the case of gases which can be liquefied by pressure, as soon as the pressure approaches the point at which liquefaction begins. Boyle's law therefore was proved to be correct only within definite limits. But is it absolutely and finally true even within those limits? No physicist would assert that this was so. He would say that it holds good within certain limits of pressure and temperature and for certain gases; and even within these more restricted limits he would not exclude the possibility of a still narrower limitation or altered formulation as the result of future investigations.\* This is how things stand with final and ultimate truths in physics for example. Really scientific works therefore as a rule avoid such dogmatic and moral expressions as error and truth, while these expressions meet us everywhere in works such as the philosophy of reality, in which empty phrase-mongering attempts to impose on us as the sovereign result of sovereign thought.

But, a naïve reader may ask, where has Herr Dühring expressly stated that the content of his philosophy of reality is final and even ultimate truth? Where? Well, for example, in the dithyramb on his system (page 13), a part of which we cited in Chapter II. Or when he says, in the passage quoted above: Moral truths, in so far as their ultimate basis is understood, claim the same validity as mathematical truths. And does not Herr Dühring assert that, from his really critical standpoint and by means of those researches of his which go to the roots of things, he has forced his way through to these ultimate foundations, to the basic schemata, and has thus bestowed final and ultimate validity on moral truths? Or, if Herr Dühring does not advance this claim either for himself or for his age, if he only meant to say that some day in the dark and nebulous

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\* Since I wrote the above it would seem already to have been confirmed. According to the latest researches carried out with more exact apparatus by Mendelejev and Bogusky, all true gases show a variable relation between pressure and volume; the coefficient of expansion for hydrogen, at all the pressures so far applied, has been positive, that is, the diminution of volume was slower than the increase of pressure; in the case of atmospheric air and the other gases examined, there is for each a zero point of pressure, such that with pressure below this point their coefficients are positive, and with pressure above this point their coefficients are negative. So Boyle's law, which has always hitherto been usable for practical purposes, will need completion by a whole series of special laws. We also know now—1885—that there are no "true" gases at all. They have all been reduced to a liquid form. (*Note by F. Engels.*)

future it will be possible to establish final and ultimate truths, if therefore he meant to say much the same, only in a more confused way, as those he charges with "mordant scepticism" and "barren confusion"—then, in that case, what is all the noise about, and what is Herr Dühring driving at?

If we have not made much progress with truth and error, we can make even less with good and bad. This antithesis belongs exclusively to the domain of morals, that is, a domain belonging to the history of mankind, and it is precisely in this field that final and ultimate truths are most sparsely sown. The conceptions of good and bad have varied so much from nation to nation and from age to age that they have often been in direct contradiction to each other. But all the same, someone may object, good is not bad and bad is not good; if good is confused with bad there is an end to all morality, and everyone can do and leave undone whatever he cares. This is also, stripped of all oracular phrases, Herr Dühring's opinion. But the matter cannot be so simply disposed of. If it was such an easy business there would certainly be no dispute at all over good and bad; everyone would know what was good and what was bad. But how do things stand today? What morality is preached to us today? There is first Christian-feudal morality, inherited from past periods of faith; and this again has two main subdivisions, Catholic and Protestant moralities, each of which in turn has no lack of further subdivisions from the Jesuit-Catholic and Orthodox-Protestant to loose "advanced" moralities. Alongside of these we find the modern bourgeois morality and with it too the proletarian morality of the future, so that in the most advanced European countries alone the past, present and future provide three great groups of moral theories which are in force simultaneously and alongside of one another. Which is then the true one? Not one of them, in the sense of having absolute validity; but certainly that morality which contains the maximum of durable elements is the one which, in the present, represents the overthrow of the present, represents the future: that is, the proletarian.

But when we see that the three classes of modern society, the feudal aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, each have their special morality, we can only draw the conclusion, that men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their moral ideas in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based—from the economic relations in which they carry on production and exchange.

But nevertheless there is much that is common to the three moral theories mentioned above—is this not at least a portion of a morality which is eternally fixed? These moral theories represent three different stages of the same historical development, and have therefore a common

historical background, and for that reason alone they necessarily have much in common. Even more. In similar or approximately similar stages of economic development moral theories must of necessity be more or less in agreement. From the moment when private property in movable objects developed, in all societies in which this private property existed there must be this moral law in common: Thou shalt not steal. Does this law thereby become an eternal moral law? By no means. In a society in which the motive for stealing has been done away with, in which therefore at the very most only lunatics would ever steal, how the teacher of morals would be laughed at who tried solemnly to proclaim the eternal truth: Thou shalt not steal!

We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and forever immutable moral law on the pretext that the moral world too has its permanent principles which transcend history and the differences between nations. We maintain on the contrary that all former moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality was always a class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or, as soon as the oppressed class has become powerful enough, it has represented the revolt against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed. That in this process there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, cannot be doubted. But we have not yet passed beyond class morality. A really human morality which transcends class antagonisms and their legacies in thought becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions but has even forgotten them in practical life. And now it is possible to appreciate the presumption shown by Herr Dühring in advancing his claim, from the midst of the old class society and on the eve of a social revolution, to impose on the future classless society an eternal morality which is independent of time and changes in reality. Even assuming—what we do not know up to now—that he understands the structure of the society of the future at least in its main outlines. . . .

. . . It is difficult to deal with morality and law without coming up against the question of so-called free will, of human responsibility, of the relation between freedom and necessity. And the philosophy of reality also has not only one but even two solutions of this problem.

“All false theories of freedom must be replaced by what we know from experience is the nature of the relation between rational judgment on the one hand and instinctive impulse on the other, a relation which *so to speak* unites them into a single mean force. The fundamental facts of this



form of dynamics must be drawn from observation, and for the calculation in advance of events which have not yet occurred must also be estimated *as closely as possible*, in general both as to their nature and magnitude. In this way the foolish delusions of inner freedom, which have been a source of worry and anxiety for thousands of years, are not only thoroughly cleared away, but are also replaced by something positive, which can be made use of for the practical regulation of life.”—On this basis freedom consists in rational judgment pulling a man to the right while irrational impulses pull him to the left, and in this parallelogram of forces the actual movement follows the direction of the diagonal. Freedom is therefore the mean between judgment and impulse, reason and unreason, and its degree in each individual case can be determined on the basis of experience by a “personal equation,” to use an astronomical expression. But a few pages later on we find: “We base moral responsibility on freedom, which however in our view means nothing more than susceptibility to conscious motives in accordance with our natural and acquired intelligence. All such motives operate with the inevitable force of natural law, notwithstanding our awareness of the possible contradiction in the actions; but it is precisely on this inevitable compulsion that we rely when we bring in the moral lever.”

This second definition of freedom, which quite unceremoniously gives a knock-out blow to the other, is again nothing but an extremely superficial rendering of the Hegelian conception of the matter. Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the appreciation of necessity. “Necessity is *blind only in so far as it is not understood*.” Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. This holds good in relation both to the laws of external nature and to those which govern the bodily and mental existence of men themselves—two classes of laws which we can separate from each other at most only in thought but not in reality. Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with real knowledge of the subject. Therefore the *freer* a man’s judgment is in relation to a definite question, with so much the greater *necessity* is the content of this judgment determined; while the uncertainty, founded on ignorance, which seems to make an arbitrary choice among many different and conflicting possible decisions, shows by this precisely that it is not free, that it is controlled by the very object it should itself control. Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development. The first men who separated them-

selves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in civilisation was a step towards freedom. On the threshold of human history stands the discovery that mechanical motion can be transformed into heat: the production of fire by friction; at the close of the development so far gone through stands the discovery that heat can be transformed into mechanical motion: the steam engine. And, in spite of the gigantic and liberating revolution in the social world which the steam engine is carrying through—and which is not yet half completed—it is beyond question that the generation of fire by friction was of even greater effectiveness for the liberation of mankind. For the generation of fire by friction gave man for the first time control over one of the forces of Nature, and thereby separated him for ever from the animal kingdom. The steam engine will never bring about such a mighty leap forward in human development, however important it may seem in our eyes as representing all those powerful productive forces dependent on it—forces which alone make possible a state of society in which there are no longer class distinctions or anxiety over the means of subsistence for the individual, and in which for the first time there can be talk of real human freedom and of an existence in harmony with the established laws of Nature. But how young the whole of human history still is, and how ridiculous it would be to attempt to ascribe any absolute validity to our present views, is evident from the simple fact that all past history can be characterised as the history of the epoch from the practical discovery of the transformation of mechanical motion into heat up to that of the transformation of heat into mechanical motion. . . .

DAVID GUEST

# Dialectical Materialism\*

## III. THE GENERAL NATURE OF DIALECTICS

*The general nature of dialectics to be developed as the science of interconnections, in contrast to metaphysics.*—ENGELS.

### DIALECTICS AND NATURAL SCIENCE

We have shown how dialectical materialism arose as a philosophy that studies the world as a whole in its process of development, in contrast to the old materialism, based on Newtonian Mechanics and the so-called "organic" sciences (sciences of life forms), which had not progressed beyond the stage of mere classification. We have also seen that the primary urge to the dialectical revolution in philosophy came from the need to understand human history.

But in the nineteenth century big advances were made in natural science which proved that here also dialectical interconnection and development were everywhere to be found. Engels mentions three major discoveries as being of decisive importance for changing the outlook of natural science.

"The first was the proof of the transformation of energy . . . . All the innumerable operative causes in nature, which until then had led a mysterious, inexplicable existence as so-called 'forces'—mechanical force, heat, radiation (light and radiant heat), electricity, magnetism, the force of chemical combination and dissociation—are now proved to be special forms, modes of existence of one and the same energy, i.e., motion. The unity of all motion in nature is no longer a philosophical assertion but a fact of natural science."

"The second—chronologically earlier—discovery was that of the organic cell by Schwann and Schleiden—of the cell as the unit, out of the multiplication and differentiation of which all organisms, except the very lowest, arise and develop."

\* From *A Textbook of Dialectical Materialism*, by David Guest, pp. 43-64. Copyright 1939 by International Publishers. Reprinted by permission.

"But an essential gap still remained. If all multicellular organisms—plants as well as animals, including man—grow from a single cell according to the law of cell-division, whence, then, comes the infinite variety of these organisms? This question was answered by the third great discovery, the theory of evolution, which was first presented in connected form and substantiated by Darwin."

These discoveries introduced dialectics into science because they did away with the absolute boundaries formerly thought to exist between the different "forces" of nature, and because everywhere they showed transformation, evolution, growth—in a word, motion—to be the fundamental aspect of nature, which must be appealed to in order to explain the existing properties of "things". But it did not follow that scientists became thereby conscious or consistent dialecticians. On the contrary, there followed an epoch of theoretical confusion, in which fragments of the old conception of the world were mixed up with the new, a muddle which could only be fully cleared up by consciously adopting the viewpoint of dialectical materialism.

#### THE LAWS OF DIALECTICAL PROCESS

In order to help this process of dialectically mastering the new results of the special sciences, and so bring them into a unified whole, Engels made a special study of nineteenth-century natural science. The results of this study are embodied partly in his famous *Anti-Dühring*, but still more in that rich storehouse of thought, the incompleted manuscript of *Natur-Dialektik* (i.e. *Dialectics of Nature*).

This study convinced Engels:

"In detail—of which in general I was not in doubt—that amid the welter of innumerable changes taking place in nature, the same dialectical laws of motion are in operation as those which in history govern the apparent fortuitousness of events; the same laws as those which similarly form the thread running through the history of the development of human thought and gradually rise to consciousness in the mind of man; the laws which Hegel first developed in an all-embracing but mystical form, and which we made it our aim to strip of this mystic form and to bring clearly before the mind their complete simplicity and universality."

The "dialectical laws of motion" here referred to by Engels are simply the most general features of *process, change, development*, common to all "fields" which make up the subject matter of the special sciences. Just because these different "fields," while clearly distinguishable, are also and at the same time no more than particular aspects of one single *world process*, we should expect to find such common features. These dialectical laws are of course the most general laws possible. In what follows we will see how they provide a method applicable to each of the special sciences.

In spite of his idealistic approach Hegel gave many striking illustrations of dialectics. He was the first to give the "classical" formulation of these laws as:

- (1) The law of the transformation of quantity into quality, and *vice-versa*.
- (2) The law of the unity (interpenetration, identity) of opposites.
- (3) The law of the negation of the negation.

Engels adopted this formulation in his researches, while Marx often refers to these laws in his writings. We will explain and illustrate these laws by means of examples, before passing on to the more *systematic* and *unified* treatment which was given by Lenin.

#### THE LAW OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF QUANTITY INTO QUALITY AND VICE-VERSA

This law is essential for an understanding of the rise of *new* qualities, and also for understanding the quantitative effects which may follow the appearance of such new qualities. It is one of the fundamental superiorities of dialectical over mechanical materialism that the former understands how new qualities can arise at certain nodal\* points of quantitative change—points where the change in quantity literally *becomes* qualitative change.

The simplest (and classical) example is the *change of state* of a substance, e.g. when a liquid becomes a gas (through boiling) or a solid (through freezing). Everyone knows that in such a case, gradual increase or decrease of temperature produces no departure from the quality of liquidity until suddenly a point is reached where a complete transformation is effected. The liquid (as Hegel says) does not gradually become more and more gelatinous and semi-solid. It leaps at one bound from the liquid state to the solid. The reader who is acquainted with elementary physics and chemistry will be able to find dozens of more "sophisticated" examples of this kind. Especially in chemistry does everything depend on the number and kind of atoms in the molecule, leading Engels to say that "chemistry can be termed the science of the qualitative changes of bodies as a result of changed quantitative composition."

Examples of this law in the science of human society are just as numerous, and of even more importance, owing to the fact that this is no "exact science" in which changes can be quantitatively predicted. The social revolution itself is just such a "jump," where accumulated quanti-

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\* A "node" is the term used by Hegel to denote the points beyond which a thing cannot vary while remaining the same thing. On passing the "nodal" line it becomes something else, or "other."

tative alterations pass into qualitative change. In the next chapter we will see how this conception of change by means of *revolutionary leaps* distinguished the Marxist from the Fabian or "gradualist" view of social evolution. Marx's great work *Capital* is full of examples of this dialectical law (specially Part IV, *Production of Relative Surplus Value*, which treats of the different *stages* in the development of modern large-scale industry). On the other hand when a qualitative change has taken place, such as the coming into existence of large-scale capitalist industry, this is in itself productive of the greatest quantitative changes in many fields (e.g. increase in political activity of the masses, their state of education, etc.).

In the practical work of a revolutionary movement examples are just as frequent. Take for instance the growth and development of the revolutionary party. This does not proceed smoothly and evenly, but as everyone knows in an extremely jerky manner. This does not mean that slow quantitative changes are not taking place here all the time, but their full effect only becomes apparent when they have sufficiently accumulated to force a complete "change in the political situation," locally or nationally.\*

In the human thought-process this law is exemplified by any case of the emergence (whether in the consciousness of the individual or of society) of a *new* idea or theory. As illustrations we may take the philosophical tendencies we have studied, but examples may equally be drawn from such wide-apart fields as scientific theory and musical idiom.

#### THE LAW OF THE UNITY OF OPPOSITES

*The second dialectical law*, that of "the unity, interpenetration or identity of opposites" (as the case may be) asserts the essentially *contradictory* character of reality—and at the same time asserts that these "opposites" which are everywhere to be found do not remain in stark, metaphysical opposition, but also exist in unity. This law was known to the early Greeks. It was classically expressed by Hegel over a hundred years ago:

"Positive and negative are supposed to express an absolute difference. The two however are at bottom the same; the name of either might be transformed to the other. Thus, for example, debts and assets are not two particular, self-subsisting species of property. What is negative to the debtor is positive to the creditor. A way to the East is also a way to the West. Positive and negative are therefore intrinsically conditioned by one another, and are only in relation to each other. The North Pole of the magnet cannot be without the South Pole and *vice-versa*. If we cut a magnet in two, we have not a North Pole in one piece and

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\* It is important to remember that dialectical materialism does not deny gradualism in social development. It is not a question of *either* gradualism or non-gradualism. What has to be grasped is *both* in conjunction, the qualitative leap in the quantitative series.

a South Pole in the other. Similarly, in electricity, the positive and the negative are not two diverse and independent fluids. In opposition the difference is not confronted by *any* other, but by *its* other."

The lapse of a century has only served to emphasise this universal co-existence of opposites noted by Hegel. As Bernal has stated:

"The history of the physical sciences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows a steady drift away from the mechanical views of Newton into a set of irreducible dialectical opposites such as—wave and particle, matter and energy, statistical and determinate, aggregating and segregating processes."

The importance of understanding this contradictory character of things is that it gives the clue to the *inner* process of their development, which takes place through the conflict of these opposites. That is why Lenin called contradiction "the salt of dialectics" and stated that "the division of the one and the cognition of its contradictory parts is the *essence* of dialectics."

In the next chapter we will see how Marxism explained the evolution of human society by unearthing the fundamental contradiction which was the driving force of that evolution. Meanwhile as an illustration of contradictions (which are not just "flat" contradictions) in the realm of thought, we may consider the origin of the word "dialectic" in its present sense. This has been explained as derived by Hegel from the same root as "dialogue"—the idea being that the conflict of opposites, which leads to the dialectical movement in general, is essentially similar to that clash of opinions, which "in the course of a lively and fruitful conversation" leads to the emergence of some new point of view.

In interpreting and applying this dialectical law of the unity of opposites we must beware of letting the "unity" swallow up the fundamental "opposition." As we will see, with the help of an "awful" example, in Chapter VI, the *unity* exists only from a relative, restricted standpoint—the temporary "here and now." But from the standpoint of the developing universe as a whole, what is vital is not this temporary "here and now" but rather the motion and change which follows from the *conflict* of the opposite.

#### THE LAW OF THE NEGATION OF THE NEGATION

This law states one of the most characteristic features of evolutionary process in all fields—that development takes place in a kind of spiral, one change negating a given state of affairs and a succeeding change, which negated the first, re-establishing (in a more developed form, or "on a higher plane" as it is often expressed) some essential feature of the original state of affairs.

In the last chapter we considered an example of this law in the history of human thought—the development of modern dialectical materialism by means of a negation of that mechanical materialism which was itself a negation of the original “naïve” materialist conception of the world.

This law of dialectical process is like the others in that it cannot be arbitrarily “foisted” upon Nature or history. It cannot be used as a substitute for empirical facts, or used to “predict” things without a concrete study of the facts in question. . . . Marx and Engels were very emphatic about this. But despite their explicit statements to the contrary the accusation that they *did* so use dialectics (in an *idealist* way) is one of the commonest reproaches levelled against Marxism—ever since a certain Dr. Dühring, in the year 1875, discovered that Marx had proved the inevitability of the proletarian revolution mystically, by means of the law of the negation of the negation. Since essentially the same “discovery” has been made in our up-to-date English world over half a century later by two English publishers (B. Russell and E. Carr) it will be well to reproduce the gist of Engels’ reply to Dühring.

At the end of the chapter of *Capital* entitled *Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation*, in which the early history of capitalism is reviewed, Marx sums up his conclusion in these words:

“The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation.”

This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era, i.e. on co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the “means of production.” If read by itself, i.e. in false undialectical isolation from the rest of the book, this passage might conceivably be misunderstood in the way indicated. But coming at the conclusion of a vast detailed study of the workings of capitalism, in a section where it is shown that the very development of capitalism of necessity *intensifies* the proletarian struggle against it, there can be no excuse except the incurable blindness of bourgeois thinkers, for such misrepresentation. Rather must we agree with Engels when he says:

“Marx merely shows from history, and in this passage states in a summarised form, that just as the former petty industry necessarily, through its own development, created the conditions of its own annihilation, i.e., of the expropriation of the small proprietors, so now the capitalist mode of production has likewise itself created the material conditions which will annihilate it. The process is an historical



one, and if it is at the same time a dialectical process, this is not Marx's fault, however annoying it may be for Herr Dühring."

#### DIALECTICS AS A METHOD

The account of the dialectical laws just given may seem somewhat arbitrary and disjointed. That is because, for the purposes of easy explanation, we have singled out certain particular aspects of dialectical process (the most important aspects undoubtedly) and illustrated these by examples drawn from diverse fields. But in doing this we have not brought out with sufficient clearness the essential unity of these different aspects of dialectics. Our treatment has not itself been sufficiently dialectical.

This weakness we will attempt to remedy by explaining the very systematic dialectical "methodology" which was given by Lenin in his *Notes on Hegel's Logic*. In these *Notes* Lenin writes that: "Dialectics may be briefly defined as the theory of the unity of opposites. That covers the kernel of dialectics but needs explanation and development." This "explanation and development" he proceeds to give in some sixteen points, whose internal movement and life correspond to the objective dialectic of the world that they reflect. We will reproduce these points together with some brief explanations.

All thinking has to start by abstracting or "isolating" certain features of the world process, by concentrating on these to the exclusion of others. Thinking has to start with *objects, things*. Therefore the first requirement of dialectical thinking is, very simply, to view things as they actually are in their separation—or Lenin's point (1) "*Objectivity* of observation (not examples, not unrepresentative forms, but the thing itself)."

But this first step, breaking up the dialectic of reality, has to be completed by a further step reforming that dialectic.

"If the universe is an inter-related changing process, we recognise it in parts by separating out, in thought, certain partial processes—aspects such, for example, as society, the means of production, changing objects, words. These we will call Isolates. An isolate is something that has been dragged from its environment in space, time, and matter. By itself, therefore, it is a fiction, for dialectically nothing can be free of environment; but it is a real fiction in the sense that it really does have an objective existence. The first step in the study of the dialectic is to chip out its isolates, to study them, and then *to remake the dialectic by seeing them again in their environment*" (Levy; our italics, D. G.).

Only by taking this second step of *remaking* the dialectic (which is a true "negation of the negation") can we overcome metaphysical isolation and one-sidedness, can we see the world again in its interconnections and movement. This second step is Lenin's point (2) that we must consider "the totality of the manifold *relations* of each thing to others."

Everything is not only part of the great world process but is itself essentially a process. Its "nature" cannot be understood apart from the form of change it undergoes, that is inherent in it. We must therefore consider point (3) "the *development* of the thing or the phenomenon, its own movement, its own life."

But this development is not something that proceeds in an automatic fashion, without cause, "mystically." Development is always the result of internal conflict as well as of external relations, themselves including conflict. It can only be explained and rationally grasped to the extent that the internal contradictions of the thing have been investigated. Hence Lenin's point (4) that we must search for "the inner contradictory *tendencies (and sides)* in the thing," and must see point (5) "the thing (appearance, etc.) as the sum and *unity of opposites*"; we must also examine point (6) "the *struggle* or unfolding of these opposites, that which conflicts with these strivings, etc."

Every "thing" is itself vastly complicated, made up of innumerable sides and aspects, related in various ways to every other thing. It can only be understood by the combined process of splitting up into these parts (analysis) and seeing them in their inter-relation (synthesis). This process is inexhaustible in the wealth of aspects revealed by each successive stage of analysis. These considerations are more precisely indicated in Lenin's points 7-12 which run as follows:

(7) Union of *analysis* and *synthesis*, the splitting into the separate parts and the totality, summation of these parts together.

(8) The *relations* of each thing (or appearance, etc.) not only manifold, but *general, universal*. Each thing (or appearance, process, etc.) is connected with *every other*.

(9) Not only union of opposites, but *transitions* of *each* determination, each quality, each feature, each side, each property in *every* other (into its opposite?).

(10) An *infinite process* of revealing *new* sides, relations, etc.

(11) An infinite process of *deepening the knowledge* of the thing, appearance, process, etc., by man, *from appearance to essence*, and from less deep to deeper essence.

(12) *From co-existence to causality*, and from one form of connection and reciprocal dependence to another deeper and more general.

This struggle of opposites which causes development leads at a certain point to a revolutionary *break*, to the emergence of a new thing (or quality). The main features of this revolutionary jump from one stage to another are described in the remaining points 13-16.

(13) The *repetition* of certain features, properties, etc., of the *lower stage* in the *higher* and . . .

(14) apparent return to the old (*negation of the negation*).

- (15) *The struggle of content with form and vice-versa.*
- (16) *Passing of quantity into quality and vice-versa.*
- (15) and (16) are examples of (9).

These sixteen points include those features of the dialectical process already considered. But besides being greatly expanded, they are seen in their real living inter-relationship, they are grasped dialectically.

#### IV. DIALECTICS OF SOCIETY

*Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.*—MARX.

#### DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND HISTORY

We have approached Dialectical Materialism from what seems to-day the most natural point of view—the point of view of the worker whose practice is already guided by Marxist principles and who wants to grasp more fully the scientific outlook implied by them. But in doing this we have inverted the real order of historical development. Historically, dialectical materialism appeared as the first world outlook to take *human practical activity*, as well as the so-called “external World” as its subject-matter. And for this very reason it gave birth to the science of history, to *Historical Materialism*, more usually known in this country as the *Materialist Conception of History* (the necessary theoretical basis of “scientific socialism”).

It is still true that only those who accept the dialectical materialist standpoint treat history as a science (i.e. admit that it points the way to the future, that it is not merely concerned with “writing up” the stale gossip of the past). This is illustrated by a recent book of Bertrand Russell’s (*Freedom and Organisation*, 1814-1914) where it is maintained that “history, in short, is not yet a science, and can only be made to seem a science by falsifications and omission” (p. 8).

The refutation of this bourgeois view is simply the continued success of Marxism in predicting the general tendency of world events. Since the world economic crisis, with its accompaniments of the spread of fascism and the practical proof of the economic superiority of the Soviet system—events which can only be understood in terms of Marxism—many bourgeois intellectuals have come to see daylight. It is not impossible that Bertrand Russell will struggle through to clarity, in spite of his *scepticism*. But the bourgeoisie as a class will never be satisfied with this “theoretical” refutation (though it is based on objective social practice). The only refutation that they will find convincing will be the *practical* refutation of their own revolutionary overthrow.

This refusal to treat history as a science is also found in the *Utopian Socialism* already referred to.

The Socialist predecessors of Marx had condemned the evils of capitalism and had painted brilliant pictures of a better social order, but they were unable to *explain* those evils or see the proletariat as the force that would rebuild society. "To all these," as Engels said, "socialism is the expression of absolute truth, reason and justice, and needs only to be discovered to conquer the world by virtue of its own power; as absolute truth is independent of time and space and of the historical development of man, it is a mere accident when and where it is discovered. At the same time, absolute truth, reason and justice are different for the founder of each different school. . . ."

Historically, Marxism arose in opposition to the socialism of the various Utopian sects as the theoretical expression of *actually existing* class struggle. In the words of *The Communist Manifesto*:

"The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer.

"They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from an historical movement going on under our very eyes."

After Marxism had come into existence the Utopian (essentially idealist) view-point lost its historical justification. But it continued to be held by those who wished to oppose the consistent revolutionary standpoint. This *regenerate* Utopianism is still at the bottom of the reformism that has played so disastrous a role in the recent history of the labour movement. As an illustration of the contrast between the Marxist and Utopian points of view we may consider the way in which the social struggle is presented in two books, each of them "classics" but in somewhat different ways.

In the opening passage of *Socialism; Critical and Constructive* by J. R. MacDonald (for thirty years a leading theorist of reformism in Britain) we read: "Two great forces are ever in conflict in the breast of society—habit, the force of stagnation, and reason, the force of change." But on which side is "reason" and which "habit," and who is to be the judge, and how are we to judge when change is proposed from two opposite directions, are surely questions we are entitled to ask.\* In actual fact this typical MacDonaldite nebulosity can only serve the purpose of masking the *real struggles* by turning attention to their *ideal reflections*

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\* MacDonald himself was an example of how "reason" can be used to excuse refusal to change. He blamed the Communists for making a "habit" of changing everything!

(and reflections in no clear stream but in a very muddy pool indeed, MacDonald's brain). This passage almost cries out for comparison with the challenging opening paragraph of the first section of *The Communist Manifesto*:

"The history of all hitherto existing society [primitive society excepted] is the history of class struggles.

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight. . . ."

What a difference here from the confusing vagueness of a MacDonald! How clearly and sharply this passage stands out, lighting up directly the conflict that has been (at least in historic times) the moving force of social development—the *class struggle*, that struggle whose very existence is to-day denied by the hypocritical bourgeoisie!

#### THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

If we apply our dialectic method to society, if we make this society in process of development our object of consideration, then (as explained in Chapter III) we immediately look for its "inner contradictory tendencies and sides." At first sight we appear to have found the fundamental contradiction in the *class struggle* whose importance is brought out in the above quoted passage from *The Communist Manifesto*.

But with the development of society the "contending classes" have changed. Each social revolution in having solved the issue of one class struggle has replaced it by new classes and new conflicts. There has also to be taken into account the fact that primitive society knew no classes, and developed notwithstanding, and that there will be no classes in communist society. All this compels us to look deeper for the very source of class conflict.

Marx found the basis of the class struggle to lie in a contradiction between the methods of production (the "material productive forces") and the existing *social relationships* (the "relations of production"). It is this contradiction which during a certain historic period gets expressed in an external *antagonism of classes*. When this is so (for instance under capitalism) one class (e.g. the proletariat) represents the forces of production seeking to expand, and another class (e.g. the bourgeoisie) represents those social relations which are hemming in the productive forces.

But the basic contradiction will continue to exist in classless society, and will cause the progressive development of social relationships as the productive forces themselves develop.

The clearest exposition of this "materialist conception of history" was given by Marx in his preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*, from which we reproduce the most important passage:

"In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins the epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, æsthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the task itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois modes of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society."

## SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

Superbly clear though the above formulation of the materialist conception of history must seem, and richly though it is supplemented in many writings of Marx and Engels, there is no other side of Marxism that has been more often and more *wilfully* misunderstood. We must therefore clear up a number of points that are most frequently raised in criticism.

In the above quoted passage it will be seen that three *main factors* are distinguished: firstly, the *material productive forces* (also referred to as “the mode of production of the material means of existence”); secondly the *social relations* (or “productive relationships”) which would be the immediate relations of producers in classless society but become *class* relations in class society; thirdly, the *ideological* forms of consciousness (juridical, political, religious, æsthetic, philosophic).

This order in which the factors have been given is not arbitrary, but represents the basic materialist element in the Marxist view of society. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.” The “mode of production” is the ultimate decisive factor influencing the form of society, the conflicts within society, and the types of ideas that become dominant. In this sense the mode of production is often referred to as the “basis,” while the social relations and consciousness are called the “superstructure of society.”

But it would be wrong to understand this use of the terms *mechanically* in the sense that everything in the “superstructure” is rigidly determined by the “basis.” Marx and Engels often protested against this over-simplification (in fact, falsification) of their theories.

“According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into the systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historic struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless *host* of accidents (i.e. of things and events whose interconnection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we can regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic movement

finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree."

Closely related to this misconception is the view that Marxism implies a rigid *fatalism*, that the course of history is "destined" inevitably to follow some path quite independently of, and even *in spite of* human wills. Such fatalism is at bottom entirely mystical—only God could "ordain" the world to proceed in this fashion. No view could in fact be more opposed to the spirit of Marxism, which so far from under-rating the importance of human will, seeks rather to explain the *origin* of that will. "Men make their own history," said Marx, "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past." These circumstances include factors of all three kinds described above, and between them "the mode of production in material life" upon which in the last resort everything else depends, is the finally decisive factor.

#### EVOLUTION: MARXIST AND FABIAN CONCEPTIONS

We have explained how dialectical philosophy brought evolution into vogue, and how later evolutionary views became dominant in science as a result of men like Darwin. While this fact may be recognised to-day there is a widespread tendency to belittle the value of dialectics, and a feeling that evolution in the Darwin-Herbert Spencer sense is after all a more "up-to-date" substitute. This question is closely connected with the opposition of two views of human social development which may be designated briefly as the Fabian view of "the inevitability of gradualness," and the Marxist view of evolution through class struggle with unavoidable revolutionary "jumps."

The former view is naturally popular with bourgeois thinkers. Speaking of the way in which it arose as a reaction from the old metaphysics, Plekhanov says:

"The old metaphysics was stood upon its head. Just as before, phenomena remained separated from the one another by an impassable gap. And this metaphysics has become so firmly rooted in the heads of modern evolutionists that there are 'sociologists' to-day who show a complete lack of understanding every time they are compelled in their investigations to deal with revolutions. In their opinion revolution cannot be combined with evolution. *Historia non facit saltus*—history makes no leaps. If in spite of such wisdom revolutions in history nevertheless take place, and even great revolutions, that does not in the least disturb them. They firmly cling to their theory. So much the worse for the revolutions which disturb their calm. They are considered as 'maladies'."



The great weakness of the "gradualist" view is that it is restricted to explaining the growth or decline of something "already there." It is quite unable to explain the origin of anything really *new*. It is here that the supreme importance of dialectics as a method can be seen. By turning attention to the contradictions which give rise to development, and to the revolutionary jumps in that development, dialectics gives an immeasurably superior insight into the *meaning* of the facts discovered by research.

When the Webbs and Hammonds studied the early history of British capitalism they went over essentially the same ground, dealt with the same "raw material" of facts as Marx deals with in *Capital*. Yet at what a different type of conclusion they arrive! (if one can indeed speak of proposals for social reform as historical "conclusions"). History has since shown who was right, the revolutionary dialectician or the Fabian evolutionists. But the Fabians did not go wrong through any personal or accidental failings. Indeed we have specially selected names of writers whose ability and conscientious work is not open to question in this way. What hindered them was their inability to understand class struggle, at bottom their failure to look for the "inner contradictory tendencies in the thing." And what enabled Marx to discover "the economic law of motion of modern society" was his possession of a concept "much more abundant in content than the current theory of evolution," i.e. the many-sided dialectical theory of development.

F. J. KLINGENDER

## Marxism and Modern Art\*

### REALISM: MARX AND ENGELS

Whatever its limitations, Chernyshevski's approach with its resolute rejection of all forms of philosophical idealism and mysticism clears the ground for a conception which regards art as a means of expressing the interests and aspirations of the people.

It is important to stress that it is not a theory of *formal* naturalism (although it may well have been interpreted as such in the mid-nineteenth century, at any rate as far as the visual arts are concerned). Chernyshevski explicitly differentiates his conception of "reproduction" from the ancient view of art as the "imitation" of nature which applies the test of "correctness or incorrectness" to the arts. His own demand for realism—the demand that art should reproduce and interpret what interests man in life—refers, on the contrary, exclusively to the *content* of art, and not to its form. All he claims regarding the *form* of art is, in the first place, that it should fully express what the artist means to convey and, secondly, that it should impart general significance to the artist's image of a particular aspect of reality.

This restriction of the meaning of realism to the content of art, which leaves the artist free to express his vision of reality in whatever manner he deems best, corresponds to the evidence of history. There has always been a realist current in art, in the sense that certain artists have endeavored to depict the actual conditions of life and not its idealization, although for centuries at a time this trend was submerged in the neglected undercurrent of folk-art or popular satire. But whether one takes the ancient mime or fifteenth-century misericords, the paintings of Bruegel or those of Goya, Gargantua or Don Quixote, Gulliver or the Drapier's Letters,

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\* From the book of the same title, pp. 22-45. Copyright 1945 by International Publishers. Reprinted by permission.

Robinson Crusoe or Moll Flanders—the great tradition of realism has at all times been distinguished by a combination, or else by the alternate use, of quite distinct forms of expression. Side by side with the endeavor to depict the actual appearance of things in a frank and often drastic manner—side by side, in other words, with realism in the *formal* sense of the term—there has always been a simultaneous urge to express the hidden meaning of things—or else the necessity of concealing their plain meaning from the censor's inquisitive eyes—either through a caricature-like exaggeration of reality or else through more or less fantastic symbols (e.g. the animal fable, monsters, grotesques, etc.).\* The great realists of Chernyshevski's own age also employed these two main forms of expression. Balzac wrote *The Unknown Masterpiece* as well as *le Père Goriot*, Shchedrin his *Fables* as well as the *Golovlyov Family*.

Nevertheless, to be useful for us today, Chernyshevski's broad formulations need to be refined and amplified. We want to know more fully how the artist has succeeded in the past and can succeed today in giving general significance to his particular image of reality; and we also need to know precisely how the test of truth can be applied to the evaluation of different kinds of images.

Chernyshevski's theory is particularly interesting for Marxists, because this great forerunner of Russian revolutionary socialism, who spent many years in exile in Siberia, adopted the materialist point of view of Feuerbach<sup>†</sup> for his attack on the Hegelian conception of art. Indeed, he claimed no more than to have applied Feuerbach's methods of analysis to the special sphere of aesthetics. Chernyshevski's thesis can therefore be regarded as the immediate predecessor of the Marxist theory of art, and its limitations can be discovered by turning to Marx's and Engels' critique of its philosophical basis, the materialism of Feuerbach.

In the first of his famous *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx wrote:

"The chief defect of all materialism up to now (including Feuerbach's) is, that the object, reality, what we apprehend through our senses, is understood only in the form of the *object* or *contemplation*; but not as *sensuous human activity*, as *practice*; not subjectively."

This statement is of great significance for evaluating Chernyshevski's

\* Many of these symbols betray their realistic content by their origin: they are *burlesques* of the religious symbols ruling at the time (e.g. the grotesque Zeus or Hercules of the ancient mime; the parody of the Nativity in the Coventry Miracle Play; the mock ceremonies, ridiculing the most sacred rites of the Church, of the mediaeval "Feasts of Fools"; the conversion of Satan into the comic devil and later Harlequin, etc.).

† The revolutionary significance of this point of view is evident from the fact that the Tsarist censor did not allow Chernyshevski even to mention Feuerbach's name either in the first edition or in the edition of 1888. It was not until 1906 that the original preface which mentions the names of Hegel and Feuerbach was allowed to appear.

conception of "reproduction." Chernyshevski follows Feuerbach in regarding reality as an isolated sphere, distinct from "man," an "object" which the artist reproduces for "man" to contemplate. Marx, on the other hand, insists that humanity is an inseparable part of reality, and that our consciousness is but the reflection in our minds of our own *practical activity* in changing reality. Art, too, is part of this practical activity of changing the world. Far from reproducing an eternally unvarying "Nature" for the contemplation of "man," it reflects the unceasing struggle of humanity to master the forces of Nature. Indeed, the artist is in the vanguard of that struggle, for by virtue of his sensibility he is continually discovering new aspects of reality of which his fellow men are not as yet aware. Thus "beauty" is not eternally the same; its ever-changing substance must be continually discovered and rediscovered by the artist and transmitted by him to his fellow men. As Marx puts it: "The work of art—like any other product—*produces* a public conscious of its own peculiar beauty and capable of enjoying it."

Another fundamental limitation of Feuerbach's approach which is shared by Chernyshevski is defined in the sixth thesis of Marx:

"Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of *man*. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual. In its reality it is the *ensemble* (aggregate) of social relations.

"Feuerbach, who does not enter more deeply into the criticism of this real essence, is therefore forced to abstract from the process of history . . . and to postulate an abstract—*isolated*—human individual."

There are passages in Chernyshevski's essay which show that he was not unaware of the inadequacy of the abstraction "man"—thus he points out that the peasant's conception of life and hence of beauty differs from that of the aristocrat and that there are similar differences between the standards of taste prevailing at different historical periods—but it was left to Marx and Engels to point out the full significance of such differences. "Man" in the abstract is a fiction. "The essence of man" can have no meaning other than the social relations of men in their struggle with Nature. Consciousness is the reflection in the minds of men of these social relations.

"Language," wrote Marx, "is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness, as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for me personally as well; for language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men. . . . Consciousness is therefore from the beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all."

"Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." Consequently, to understand consciousness, or any particular manifesta-

tion of consciousness, such as a work of art, one must start from the "real living individuals themselves, as they are in actual life" and consider "consciousness solely as *their* consciousness."

"Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking."\*

Nevertheless, there is a modicum of truth in Roger Fry's claim "that the usual assumption of a direct and decisive connection between art and life is by no means correct" (even if we take "life" in the broad meaning of the term and not in Fry's sense of the self-consciousness of the elect). But Fry's conception of what constitutes a "direct and decisive connection" is purely mechanical. In the "violently foreshortened view of history and art" which forms the first part of his Fabian lecture he shows that there have been many periods in history when there was "progress" in life while art stagnated or even declined, and *vice versa*. This is, of course, perfectly true; but it never seems to have occurred to Fry that an inverse relationship may also be due to a "direct and decisive connection." Indeed, as early as 1846 Marx and Engels had proved that a contradiction between consciousness (including art) and life was not only possible but under certain circumstances even inevitable. In the *German Ideology* they point out that this contradiction is inherent in the division of labor with its resulting stratification of society into classes which arose at a certain stage in the development of the material forces of production:

"Division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it is *really* conceiving something without conceiving something *real*; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc., comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur as a result of the fact that existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production. . . ."

\* *German Ideology*, p. 14. To forestall misinterpretation it is useful to remember Engels' statement: "Political, legal, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is grounded upon economic development. But all of them react, conjointly and separately, one upon another, and upon the economic foundation." Letter to Starkenburg, 25 January 1894. Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 517.

and further:

"The forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness, can and must come into contradiction with one another, because the division of labor implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labor, production and consumption—devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labor."

In the second part of the same work the authors show more explicitly how the division of labor and its final negation affect the arts:

"The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in certain individuals, and its consequent suppression in the broad masses of the people, is an effect of the division of labor. Even if in certain social relations everyone could become an excellent painter, that would not prevent everyone from being also an original painter. . . . With a communist organization of society, the artist is not confined by the local and national seclusion which ensues solely from the division of labor, nor is the individual confined to one specific art, so that he becomes exclusively a painter, a sculptor, etc.; these very names express sufficiently the narrowness of his professional development, and his dependence on the division of labor. In a communist society there are no painters, but at most men who, among other things, also paint."

Marx and Engels believed that of all forms of society that of fully developed industrial capitalism, in which the division between material and mental labor reaches the extreme point, was most hostile to art. The consequent decline of art, so palpable in the nineteenth century, manifested itself on the one hand in the disappearance of craftsmanship and of beauty in the sense of fitness for its purpose from all the practical arts, and on the other hand in the ever increasing specialization of the fine arts and in their ever greater remoteness from life. Yet at the same time this decline was accompanied by spectacular advances in the technique of production, including the technique of artistic production. This contradiction was expressed in the remarkable speech which Marx delivered on the occasion of the anniversary of the Chartist "People's Paper" in April 1856:

"There is one great fact characteristic of this our nineteenth century; a fact which no party dares deny. On the one hand there have started into life industrial and scientific forces which no epoch of former human history had ever suspected. On the other hand there exist symptoms of decay, far surpassing the horrors of the latter times of the Roman Empire. In our days, everything seems pregnant with its contrary: Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human

labor, we behold starving and overworking it. The new-fangled sources of wealth, by some strange, weird spell, are turned into sources of want. *The victories of art are bought by the loss of character.* At the same pace that mankind masters nature, man seems to become enslaved to other men or to his own infamy. Even the pure light of science seems unable to shine but on the dark background of ignorance. All our inventions and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between modern industry and science, on the one hand, and modern misery and dissolution, on the other; this antagonism between the productive forces and the social relations of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted. Some may wail over it; others may wish to get rid of modern arts in order to get rid of modern conflicts. Or they may imagine that so signal a progress in industry wants to be completed by as signal a regress in politics. For our part, we do not mistake the shape of the shrewd spirit that continues to mark all these contradictions. We know that to work well the new-fangled forces of society, they only want to be mastered by new-fangled men—and such are the working men. . . .”

It is evident from these quotations that Marx’s explanation of the temporary estrangement of art from life had nothing in common with Hegel’s view of the irredeemable decline of art; for Marx pointed out that the very factors which lead to a temporary decline of art at the same time create the conditions for its resurrection once men have freed themselves from their enslavement “to other men or to their own infamy.”

But Marx’s resolution of the abstraction “man” into the concrete, historically conditioned and ever changing relations of men in society, and his method of explaining all forms of consciousness in terms of those relations, also laid the foundations for a scientific history of art which attempts more than a mere *description* of its ever changing forms. Just as Marx was able to explain the characteristic trend of nineteenth century art—the trend which culminated in the formalism of today—in terms of the contradictions of nineteenth century life, so historical materialism can accomplish what Fry’s mechanical conception of “progress” could never do: namely to disclose the social roots of the entire, complex, history of styles.

It is a measure of Chernyshevski’s profound insight that, in spite of the limitations of his approach, he recognized, *why* the peasant’s conception of beauty differs from that of the courtier. The peasant cannot live without work, Chernyshevski writes, therefore “the country beauty cannot have small hands and feet . . . and folksongs do not mention such features. . . . The description of beauty in folksongs will not contain a single tribute of beauty which would not be a sign of flourishing health and balanced

strength of body, the consequences always of a life of plenty with constant, hard, though not excessive work." But precisely those features which are a sign of fitness for work in the peasant—the ruddy complexion, the sturdy figure, the strong hands—are considered "vulgar" by the sophisticated man of leisure who despises work. Instead of these he admires the languid pallor, the fragile form, the delicate extremities of the town-bred lady of fashion whose ancestors have lived for generations "without putting their hands to work." The ideals of beauty of the peasant and the nobleman are thus determined by their respective positions in the process of production and by their resulting conceptions of a "good life." What is true of their ideals of personal beauty is equally true of their artistic tastes. The aesthetic standards of the different classes differ, because their conditions of life differ; and the artist who wishes to please his public must conform to one or other of these standards. The same applies to different periods in history; differences in the conditions of life are reflected by corresponding differences in the standards of art.

This has important implications for the critical evaluation of art. While the courtier despises peasant art as crude and vulgar (unless, of course, he is a modern enthusiast for the "naïve"), the peasant on his part is no less contemptuous of sophisticated art. If a member of one class applies his own standards of appreciation to a work produced in another class or period, he does no more than express his own subjective, class- and time-conditioned preferences. He cannot do justice to the particular work, unless he *also* attempts to appreciate it in terms of *its* own standards.

But if it is true that all art must be judged in terms of its own *relative*, class- and time-conditioned standard of appreciation, does it necessarily follow that there is no *absolute*, objectively binding standard of value which can in turn be applied to these various relative standards?

Furthermore, if all art reflects the standards of a given class and period, does it follow that the artist is inevitably and rigidly bound to the standards of one particular class and period? Is Plekhanov right when he states: "Apple trees must give forth apples, pear trees, pears. . . . The art of a decadent epoch '*must*' be decadent; this is inevitable; and it would be futile to become indignant about it"?\*

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\* G. V. Plekhanov: *Art and Society*. Critics Group Series, No. 3, p. 93. Plekhanov is, of course, perfectly aware of the fact, and indeed he expressly goes on to state that "in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour" certain bourgeois artists join the revolutionary camp. But, as we shall presently see, he never resolved the contradiction between these two sets of ideas. It is not my intention to belittle the profound importance of Plekhanov's contributions to the history of art and to Marxist thought in general. If the negative elements in his theory are emphasized in the present essay, this is solely due to the fact that they come to the surface precisely in this treatment of the problems which concern us here.



It will be appreciated that the answers to these questions are of fundamental importance for all artists at the present time, but especially for those who are striving to express the interests and aspirations of the people.

## RELATIVISM

The standpoint of aesthetic relativism was advocated in the following terms by Taine in 1865:

"The new method I am attempting to follow, and which is beginning to find its way into all moral sciences, consists of viewing all human works and particularly works of art, as facts and phenomena of which it is essential to mark the characteristics and seek the causes—nothing more. Science thus understands, does not condemn or condone, it only points out and explains. It does not say: 'disdain Dutch art—it is vulgar; admire only Italian art.' Nor does it say: 'disdain Gothic art—it is morbid; admire only Greek art.' It leaves everyone free to follow his own tastes, to prefer that which conforms to his temperament and study with closer attention that which is more agreeable to the development of his spirit. With respect to art itself it is equally sympathetic to all its forms and all schools, even to those who seem diametrically opposed; they are considered different manifestations of the human spirit."

Plekhanov agrees with Taine that it is impossible to compare the relative merits of different periods and styles in art. But that Marx maintained the opposite point of view is evident from his references to the decline of art under capitalism, i.e. during an entire era which produced a whole series of styles.

The relativist attitude evidently entails an unresolved contradiction. However "objective" the historian may claim to be in his approach to all styles of art, he almost invariably betrays his own preferences in his choice of the particular schools or works which he studies in detail; and it is remarkable how closely his selection has coincided during the last eighty years with that of the avowed aesthetes. In the 1910's and '20's both "discovered" such phases as sixteenth century mannerism or primitive art, which had been neglected by their Victorian predecessors; neither has shown much concern for popular art ever since the sophisticated public for whom they wrote lost interest in its democratic implications.\*

But while the historians claim scientific validity for their analyses of the

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\* The last comprehensive studies in this field (not, of course, the last special studies of certain aspects of popular art) in English are those of Thomas Wright, published in the 1840's and '60's. Wright's contemporary, Michelet, was also greatly interested in popular art; Champfleury's history of caricature was begun in 1865; the later works by Eduard Fuchs, a friend of Mehring and a staunch socialist, have been consistently ignored by art historians and aesthetes alike.

relative standards of other periods, they rarely define the standard of their own time and class which has conditioned their choice of theme; indeed, when challenged, they generally deny that their own subjective tastes, and therefore the aesthetic conceptions of their own time, have any scientific basis at all. Thus they shelve the problem which is of main interest to the artist and his public. To the question "what is good art?" they reply: "this is what the Victorian middle class thought good art—that appealed to the feudal lord—that to the citizen of Athens—but there is no objective reason for preferring one to the other; true, we ourselves do prefer this or that period, but that is purely a matter of our own subjective taste, or of our class interests, and we cannot justify our choice in aesthetic terms."

The study of art is thus reduced to the aim of explaining the historical origin of the various styles, either in terms of social structure or in terms of such half-way-house conceptions as the "spirit of the age." But the problem of aesthetics proper, i.e., the problem of value, is evaded.

This was inevitable as long as it was of supreme importance to establish an objective historical approach in opposition to the subjective interpretations of the idealists: and that is why profound writers like Plekhanov and Mehring mainly emphasized the historical basis of Marxist thought. But it cannot be denied that the idealist reaction, which gained strength in this as in all other spheres since the early years of the present century, was in part at least provoked by the shallow distortions which the historical approach had suffered in the hands of the sociological relativists and other vulgarizers of Marxism.

It is in the answers which are often given to the second and related question—how far is the artist bound by the standards of his class and period?—that these distortions are most glaringly revealed. Writers who adopt a relativist point of view tend to assert that the artist is insolubly bound to his class. Hence they reduce the tasks of a "Marxist" art historian to a kind of crime detection which "exposes" the class affiliations of all the great artists of the past. Their attitude is summarized in the fallacious proposition that the art of the past has always expressed the interests of an exploiting class, whence it is to be expected that the classics will gradually fall out of favor with the advance of Socialism. The unprecedented and ever growing demand for all the classics in the Soviet Union and the great controversy on aesthetics which took place in that country in 1935 have exploded this fallacy. But it lingers on in the view which is still widely held among English artists that nothing can be done about the chaotic state of art in this country, since "the art of a decadent epoch *must* be decadent," and that in particular, the Socialist art of the Soviet Union can have no meaning for us at all.

Marx's own views concerning the relation of artists, and ideologists in general, to the class they represent is perfectly unambiguous:

One must not imagine, he writes, that the theoretical representatives of the democratic lower middle class "are all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be separated from them as widely as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not go beyond the limits which the latter do not go beyond in life, that they are consequently driven theoretically to the same tasks and solutions to which material interest and social position practically drive the latter. This is in general the relation of the political and literary representatives of a class to the class that they represent."

Hence it is a distortion of Marxism to assert that the content of an artist's work is rigidly determined by his own economic and social position. The artist inherits a particular conception of the world, because it corresponds to the practical attitude of the class into which he was born; if that is also the class to which his patrons belong he will, as a rule, be perfectly satisfied with that conception and express it in his work. But under certain circumstances he *may* adopt a position which is opposed to the interest of his own class, and there are even times when he *must* do so, if he is to preserve his integrity as an artist.

Consciousness, including art, is not therefore an automatic reflex of the individual's own position seen in isolation; it is the reflection in his mind, and consequently in his scientific or artistic work, of the sum-total of his social relations.

"The consciousness of the masses of the workers cannot be genuine class consciousness," wrote Lenin, "unless the workers learn to observe from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events, *every* other social class and *all* the manifestations of the intellectual, ethical life of these classes; unless they learn to apply practically the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of life and activity of *all* classes, strata and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation and the consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social-Democrats; because for its self-realization the working class must . . . have a practical understanding . . . of the relationship between *all* the various classes of modern society."

This idea which Lenin expressed in 1902 had been applied by Marx in 1846 to the interpretation of art:

"If he will compare Raphael with Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, he will see to what extent the works of art of the first were conditioned by the flourishing of Rome, then under the influence of Florence; how the

works of Leonardo were conditioned by the social milieu of Florence, and later those of Titian by the altogether different development of Venice. Raphael, like any other artist, was conditioned by the technical advances made in art before him, by the organization of society and the division of labor in his locality, and finally, by the division of labor *in all the countries with which his locality maintained relations.*"

In other words, the sum-total of relations which conditions the artist's work is coextensive with the practical contacts of his own society. Thus Dvorák was undoubtedly right when he asserted, in conscious opposition to the narrow, mechanistic approach of the "sociological" interpreters of art, that the great artist is always abreast of the most advanced spiritual (i.e. religious, philosophical, scientific, aesthetic) tendencies of his time, whatever their country of origin. It is clearly inadequate to interpret, say, the art of Bruegel purely in terms of the Flemish tradition. His work became the mirror of his people's great struggle for political and spiritual liberty precisely because he had mastered the outstanding intellectual and aesthetic achievements of his Italian, Spanish, French, German, English contemporaries, as well as his native heritage. But we cannot agree with Dvorák and his followers in divorcing the spiritual tendencies of an age from their material roots; hence we shall not fail to give due weight also to the tremendous influence which the discovery of the new world and the consequent extension of the relations of Europe exerted on Bruegel's interpretation of reality. Today the complex of social relations which conditions the outlook and the work of every artist embraces the entire globe; and the fact that an entirely new type of social relation has been established over one-sixth of the earth's surface cannot but have the most profound influence, either directly or indirectly, on the work of every artist in this country at the present time.

Seen in this light, the statement "the art of a decadent epoch must be decadent" is a fatalistic perversion of the truth. There is no such thing in history as a period of decline which is not also at the same time a period of growth. While the old forms are declining, the conditions for the emergence of the new society are maturing. Hence the description of a given period as a "period of decline" can only mean that the old, declining forces still predominate over the growing forces which will eventually replace them. As long as the declining forces predominate, their decadence will, it is true, be reflected in the *dominating* trend of art (and if these forces are themselves inimical to art, as they are in capitalist society, that decadence will be expressed in the ever-increasing estrangement of art from life); but the dominating trend is never the only trend in the art of a "period of decline," nor is it even the most significant trend. The most significant art in a decadent epoch will be as much in opposition to the dominant trend

of decadent art, as the growing forces are to the declining, but still dominating, forces in all other spheres of life. "Mankind," wrote Marx, "always takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation." And Stalin adds: "New social ideas and theories arise precisely because they are necessary to society, because it is *impossible* to carry out the urgent tasks of development of the material life of society without their organizing, mobilizing and transforming action." "Theory becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses," and it grips the masses if it goes "to the roots of things." The artist, too, must go to the roots of things. If he spurns to reflect the decadence of a declining age: "To invent," wrote Gorky, "means to extract from the sum of a given reality its cardinal idea and embody it in imagery—that is how we got realism. But if to the idea extracted from the given reality we add . . . the desired, the possible, and thus supplement the image, we obtain that romanticism which is . . . highly beneficial in that it tends to provoke a revolutionary attitude to reality, an attitude that changes the world in a practical way."





## *Four Existentialist Thinkers*

EXISTENTIALISM is a new name for some old questions, questions which have more often than not been of concern to poets and religious seekers rather than to professional philosophers. The greatest among the philosophers, however, have always been concerned with them. "What," the Existentialist philosopher asks, "in thinking and willing do *you* ultimately and seriously think and will?" "What is the nature of that truth, disclosed to you as reliable, which concerns yourself and the world in which you live?" Asked in this way, the question of our human condition, of our mortality, our contingency of being, for instance, takes on a personal character which it never had before: "Everybody must die," becomes "*I* must die." "Is there a God?" becomes, "Do *I* believe in a God?" "Does life have meaning?" becomes, "Does *my* life have meaning?"

Existentialism is thus perfectly designed for the quest for personal values. It further recommends itself to the serious student by its emphasis on the questions it asks rather than on the answers it has to offer. Its contemporary adherents and devotees belong to nearly every form of political conviction and to every form of metaphysical and epistemological persuasion. This range, which might at first appear to be a defect, turns out in the end to be really an advantage for the student; for it denotes that the Existentialists' central concern is *freedom* of the existing individual in a world where everything conspires more and more to annul and silence it. The selections which follow will amplify these themes lying at the heart of the Existentialist philosophy.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- CAMUS, ALBERT. *The Rebel*  
CAMUS, ALBERT. *The Myth of Sisyphus*  
DE BEAUVOIR, SIMONE. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*  
FALLICO, ARTURO B. *Art and Existentialism*  
HERBERG, WILL. *Four Existentialist Theologians*  
HUBBEN, WILLIAM. *Four Prophets of Our Destiny*  
JASPERS, KARL. *Man in the Modern Age*  
KAUFMANN, WALTER. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*  
SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL. *Existentialism and Humanism*  
SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL. *Being and Nothingness*  
SHINN, ROGER L. *The Existentialist Posture*



# Existentialism\*

I SHOULD like on this occasion to defend existentialism against some charges which have been brought against it.

First, it has been charged with inviting people to remain in a kind of desperate quietism because, since no solutions are possible, we should have to consider action in this world as quite impossible. We should then end up in a philosophy of contemplation; and since contemplation is a luxury, we come in the end to a bourgeois philosophy. The communists in particular have made these charges.

On the other hand, we have been charged with dwelling on human degradation, with pointing up everywhere the sordid, shady, and slimy, and neglecting the gracious and beautiful, the bright side of human nature; for example, according to Mlle. Mercier, a Catholic critic, with forgetting the smile of the child. Both sides charge us with having ignored human solidarity, with considering man as an isolated being. The communists say that the main reason for this is that we take pure subjectivity, the *Cartesian I think*, as our starting point; in other words, the moment in which man becomes fully aware of what it means to him to be an isolated being; as a result, we are unable to return to a state of solidarity with the men who are not ourselves, a state which we can never reach in the *cogito*.

From the Christian standpoint, we are charged with denying the reality and seriousness of human undertakings, since, if we reject God's commandments and the eternal verities, there no longer remains anything but pure caprice, with everyone permitted to do as he pleases and incapable, from his own point of view, of condemning the points of view and acts of others.

I shall try today to answer these different charges. Many people are

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going to be surprised at what is said here about humanism. We shall try to see in what sense it is to be understood. In any case, what can be said from the very beginning is that by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity.

As is generally known, the basic charge against us is that we put the emphasis on the dark side of human life. Someone recently told me of a lady who, when she let slip a vulgar word in a moment of irritation, excused herself by saying, "I guess I'm becoming an existentialist." Consequently, existentialism is regarded as something ugly; that is why we are said to be naturalists; and if we are, it is rather surprising that in this day and age we cause so much more alarm and scandal than does naturalism, properly so called. The kind of person who can take in his stride such a novel as Zola's *The Earth* is disgusted as soon as he starts reading an existentialist novel; the kind of person who is resigned to the wisdom of the ages—which is pretty sad—finds us even sadder. Yet, what can be more disillusioning than saying "true charity begins at home" or "a scoundrel will always return evil for good"?

We know the commonplace remarks made when this subject comes up, remarks which always add up to the same *thing*: we shouldn't struggle against the powers-that-be; we shouldn't resist authority; we shouldn't try to rise above our station; any action which doesn't conform to authority is romantic; any effort not based on past experience is doomed to failure; experience shows that man's bent is always toward trouble, that there must be a strong hand to hold him in check, if not, there will be anarchy. There are still people who go on mumbling these melancholy old saws, the people who say, "It's only human!" whenever a more or less repugnant act is pointed out to them, the people who glut themselves on *chansons réalistes*; these are the people who accuse existentialism of being too gloomy, and to such an extent that I wonder whether they are complaining about it, not for its pessimism, but much rather its optimism. Can it be that what really scares them in the doctrine I shall try to present here is that it leaves to man a possibility of choice? To answer this question, we must re-examine it on a strictly philosophical plane. What is meant by the term *existentialism*?

Most people who use the word would be rather embarrassed if they had to explain it, since, now that the word is all the rage, even the work of a musician or painter is being called existentialist. A gossip columnist in *Clartés* signs himself *The Existentialist*, so that by this time the word has been so stretched and has taken on so broad a meaning, that it no longer means anything at all. It seems that for want of an advance-guard doctrine analogous to surrealism, the kind of people who are eager for scandal and

flurry turn to this philosophy which in other respects does not at all serve their purposes in this sphere.

Actually, it is the least scandalous, the most austere of doctrines. It is intended strictly for specialists and philosophers. Yet it can be defined easily. What complicates matters is that there are two kinds of existentialist; first, those who are Christian, among whom I would include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both Catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic existentialists, among whom I class Heidegger, and then the French existentialists and myself. What they have in common is that they think that existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point.

Just what does that mean? Let us consider some object that is manufactured, for example, a book or a paper-cutter: here is an object which has been made by an artisan whose inspiration came from a concept. He referred to the concept of what a paper-cutter is and likewise to a known method of production, which is part of the concept, something which is, by and large, a routine. Thus, the paper-cutter is at once an object produced in a certain way and, on the other hand, one having a specific use; and one can not postulate a man who produces a paper-cutter but does not know what it is used for. Therefore, let us say that, for the paper-cutter, essence—that is, the ensemble of both the production routines and the properties which enable it to be both produced and defined—precedes existence. Thus, the presence of the paper-cutter or book in front of me is determined. Therefore, we have here a technical view of the world whereby it can be said that production precedes existence.

When we conceive God as the Creator, He is generally thought of as a superior sort of artisan. Whatever doctrine we may be considering, whether one like that of Descartes or that of Leibnitz, we always grant that will more or less follows understanding or, at the very least, accompanies it, and that when God creates He knows exactly what He is creating. Thus, the concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of paper-cutter in the mind of the manufacturer, and, following certain techniques and a conception, God produces man, just as the artisan, following a definition and a technique, makes a paper-cutter. Thus, the individual man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence.

In the eighteenth century, the atheism of the *philosophes* discarded the idea of God, but not so much for the notion that essence precedes existence. To a certain extent, this idea is found everywhere; we find it in Diderot, in Voltaire, and even in Kant. Man has a human nature; this human nature, which is the concept of the human, is found in all men, which means that each man is a particular example of a universal concept, man. In Kant,

the result of this universality is that the wild-man, the natural man, as well as the bourgeois, are circumscribed by the same definition and have the same basic qualities. Thus, here too the essence of man precedes the historical existence that we find in nature.

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, is more coherent. It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence.

Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism. It is also what is called subjectivity, the name we are labeled with when charges are brought against us. But what do we mean by this, if not that man has a greater dignity than a stone or table? For we mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. Man is at the start a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be. Not what he will want to be. Because by the word "will" we generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves. I may want to belong to a political party, write a book, get married; but all that is only a manifestation of an earlier, more spontaneous choice that is called "will." But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for this own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.

The word subjectivism has two meanings, and our opponents play on the two. Subjectivism means, on the one hand, that an individual chooses and makes himself; and, on the other, that it is impossible for man to transcend human subjectivity. The second of these is the essential meaning of existentialism. When we say that man chooses his own self, we mean that every one of us does likewise; but we also mean by that that in making this choice he also chooses all men. In fact, in creating the man that we

want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be. To choose to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all.

If, on the other hand, existence precedes essence, and if we grant that we exist and fashion our image at one and the same time, the image is valid for everybody and for our whole age. Thus, our responsibility is much greater than we might have supposed, because it involves all mankind. If I am a workingman and choose to join a Christian trade-union rather than be a communist, and if by being a member I want to show that the best thing for man is resignation, that the kingdom of man is not of this world, I am not only involving my own case—I want to be resigned for everyone. As a result, my action has involved all humanity. To take a more individual matter, if I want to marry, to have children; even if this marriage depends solely on my own circumstances or passion or wish, I am involving all humanity in monogamy and not merely myself. Therefore, I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of man of my own choosing. In choosing myself, I choose man.

This helps us understand what the actual content is of such rather grandiloquent words as anguish, forlornness, despair. As you will see, it's all quite simple.

First, what is meant by anguish? The existentialists say at once that man is anguish. What that means is this: the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a lawmaker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, can not help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility. Of course, there are many people who are not anxious; but we claim that they are hiding their anxiety, that they are fleeing from it. Certainly, many people believe that when they do something, they themselves are the only ones involved, and when someone says to them, "What if everyone acted that way?" they shrug their shoulders and answer, "Everyone doesn't act that way." But really, one should always ask himself, "What would happen if everybody looked at things that way?" There is no escaping this disturbing thought except by a kind of double-dealing. A man who lies and makes excuses for himself by saying "not everybody does that," is someone with an uneasy conscience, because the act of lying implies that a universal value is conferred upon the lie.

Anguish is evident even when it conceals itself. This is the anguish that Kierkegaard called the anguish of Abraham. You know the story: an

angel has ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son; if it really were an angel who has come and said, "You are Abraham, you shall sacrifice your son," everything would be all right. But everyone might first wonder, "Is it really an angel, and am I really Abraham? What proof do I have?"

There was a madwoman who had hallucinations; someone used to speak to her on the telephone and give her orders. Her doctor asked her, "Who is it who talks to you?" She answered, "He says it's God." What proof did she really have that it was God? If an angel comes to me, what proof is there that it's an angel? And if I hear voices, what proof is there that they come from heaven and not from hell, or from the subconscious, or a pathological condition? What proves that they are addressed to me? What proof is there that I have been appointed to impose my choice and my conception of man on humanity? I'll never find any proof or sign to convince me of that. If a voice addresses me, it is always for me to decide that this is the angel's voice; if I consider that such an act is a good one, it is I who will choose to say that it is good rather than bad.

Now, I'm not being singled out as an Abraham, and yet at every moment I'm obliged to perform exemplary acts. For every man, everything happens as if all mankind had its eyes fixed on him and were guiding itself by what he does. And every man ought to say to himself, "Am I really the kind of man who has the right to act in such a way that humanity might guide itself by my actions?" And if he does not say that to himself, he is masking his anguish.

There is no question here of the kind of anguish which would lead to quietism, to inaction. It is a matter of a simple sort of anguish that anybody who has had responsibilities is familiar with. For example, when a military officer takes the responsibility for an attack and sends a certain number of men to death, he chooses to do so, and in the main he alone makes the choice. Doubtless, orders come from above, but they are too broad; he interprets them, and on this interpretation depend the lives of ten or fourteen or twenty men. In making a decision he can not help having a certain anguish. All leaders know this anguish. That doesn't keep them from acting; on the contrary, it is the very condition of their action. For it implies that they envisage a number of possibilities, and when they choose one, they realize that it has value only because it is chosen. We shall see that this kind of anguish, which is the kind that existentialism describes, is explained, in addition, by a direct responsibility to the other men whom it involves. It is not a curtain separating us from action, but is part of action itself.

When we speak of forlornness, a term Heidegger was fond of, we mean only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this. The existentialist is strongly opposed to a certain kind of secular

ethics which would like to abolish God with the least possible expense. About 1880, some French teachers tried to set up a secular ethics which went something like this: God is a useless and costly hypothesis; we are discarding it; but, meanwhile, in order for there to be an ethics, a society, a civilization, it is essential that certain values be taken seriously and that they be considered as having an *a priori* existence. It must be obligatory, *a priori*, to be honest, not to lie, not to beat your wife, to have children, etc., etc. So we're going to try a little device which will make it possible to show that values exist all the same, inscribed in a heaven of ideas, though otherwise God does not exist. In other words—and this, I believe, is the tendency of everything called reformism in France—nothing will be changed if God does not exist. We shall find ourselves with the same norms of honesty, progress, and humanism, and we shall have made of God an outdated hypothesis which will peacefully die off by itself.

The existentialist, on the contrary, thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can no longer be an *a priori* Good, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. Nowhere is it written that the Good exists, that we must be honest, that we must not lie; because the fact is we are on a plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky said, "If God didn't exist, everything would be possible." That is the very starting point of existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can't start making excuses for himself.

If existence really does precede essence, there is no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. On the other hand, if God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are alone, with no excuses.

That is the idea I shall try to convey when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. The existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. He will never agree that a sweeping passion is a ravaging torrent which fatally leads a man to certain acts and is therefore an excuse. He thinks that man is responsible for his passion.

The existentialist does not think that man is going to help himself by finding in the world some omen by which to orient himself. Because he thinks that man will interpret the omen to suit himself. Therefore, he thinks that man, with no support and no aid, is condemned every moment

to invent man. Ponge, in a very fine article, has said, "Man is the future of man." That's exactly it. But if it is taken to mean that this future is recorded in heaven, that God sees it, then it is false, because it would really no longer be a future. If it is taken to mean that, whatever a man may be, there is a future to be forged, a virgin future before him, then this remark is sound. But then we are forlorn.

To give you an example which will enable you to understand forlornness better, I shall cite the case of one of my students who came to see me under the following circumstances: his father was on bad terms with his mother, and, moreover, was inclined to be a collaborationist; his older brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940, and the young man, with somewhat immature but generous feelings, wanted to avenge him. His mother lived alone with him, very much upset by the half-treason of her husband and the death of her older son; the boy was her only consolation.

The boy was faced with the choice of leaving for England and joining the Free French Forces—that is, leaving his mother behind—or remaining with his mother and helping her to carry on. He was fully aware that the woman lived only for him and that his going-off—and perhaps his death—would plunge her into despair. He was also aware that every act that he did for his mother's sake was a sure thing, in the sense that it was helping her to carry on, whereas every effort he made toward going off and fighting was an uncertain move which might run aground and prove completely useless; for example, on his way to England he might, while passing through Spain, be detained indefinitely in a Spanish camp; he might reach England or Algiers and be stuck in an office at a desk job. As a result, he was faced with two very different kinds of action: one, concrete, immediate, but concerning only one individual; the other concerned an incomparably vaster group, a national collectivity, but for that very reason was dubious, and might be interrupted en route. And, at the same time, he was wavering between two kinds of ethics. On the one hand, an ethics of sympathy, of personal devotion; on the other, a broader ethics, but one whose efficacy was more dubious. He had to choose between the two.

Who could help him choose? Christian doctrine? No. Christian doctrine says, "Be charitable, love your neighbor, take the more rugged path, etc., etc." But which is the more rugged path? Whom should he love as a brother? The fighting man or his mother? Which does the greater good, the vague act of fighting in a group, or the concrete one of helping a particular human being to go on living? Who can decide *a priori*? Nobody. No book of ethics can tell him. The Kantian ethics says, "Never treat any person as a means, but as an end." Very well, if I stay



with my mother, I'll treat her as an end and not as a means; but by virtue of this very fact, I'm running the risk of treating the people around me who are fighting, as means; and, conversely, if I go to join those who are fighting, I'll be treating them as an end, and, by doing that, I run the risk of treating my mother as a means.

If values are vague, and if they are always too broad for the concrete and specific case that we are considering, the only thing left for us is to trust our instincts. That's what this young man tried to do; and when I saw him, he said, "In the end, feeling is what counts. I ought to choose whichever pushes me in one direction. If I feel that I love my mother enough to sacrifice everything else for her—my desire for vengeance, for action, for adventure—then I'll stay with her. If, on the contrary, I feel that my love for my mother isn't enough, I'll leave."

But how is the value of a feeling determined? What gives his feeling for his mother value? Precisely the fact that he remained with her. I may say that I like so-and-so well enough to sacrifice a certain amount of money for him, but I may say so only if I've done it. I may say "I love my mother well enough to remain with her" if I have remained with her. The only way to determine the value of this affection is, precisely, to perform an act which confirms and defines it. But, since I require this affection to justify my act, I find myself caught in a vicious circle.

On the other hand, Gide has well said that a mock feeling and a true feeling are almost indistinguishable; to decide that I love my mother and will remain with her, or to remain with her by putting on an act, amount somewhat to the same thing. In other words, the feeling is formed by the acts one performs; so, I can not refer to it in order to act upon it. Which means that I can neither seek within myself the true condition which will impel me to act, nor apply to a system of ethics for concepts which will permit me to act. You will say, "At least, he did go to a teacher for advice." But if you seek advice from a priest, for example, you have chosen this priest; you already knew, more or less, just about what advice he was going to give you. In other words, choosing your adviser is involving yourself. The proof of this is that if you are a Christian, you will say, "Consult a priest." But some priests are collaborating, some are just marking time, some are resisting. Which to choose? If the young man chooses a priest who is resisting or collaborating, he has already decided on the kind of advice he's going to get. Therefore, in coming to see me he knew the answer I was going to give him, and I had only one answer to give: "You're free, choose, that is, invent." No general ethics can show you what is to be done; there are no omens in the world. The Catholics will reply, "But there are." Granted—but, in any case, I myself choose the meaning they have.

When I was a prisoner, I knew a rather remarkable young man who was a Jesuit. He had entered the Jesuit order in the following way: he had had a number of very bad breaks; in childhood, his father died, leaving him in poverty, and he was a scholarship student at a religious institution where he was constantly made to feel that he was being kept out of charity; then, he failed to get any of the honors and distinctions that children like; later on, at about eighteen, he bungled a love affair; finally, at twenty-two, he failed in military training, a childish enough matter, but it was the last straw.

This young fellow might well have felt that he had botched everything. It was a sign of something, but of what? He might have taken refuge in bitterness or despair. But he very wisely looked upon all this as a sign that he was not made for secular triumphs, and that only the triumphs of religion, holiness, and faith were open to him. He saw the hand of God in all this, and so he entered the order. Who can help seeing that he alone decided what the sign meant?

Some other interpretation might have been drawn from this series of setbacks; for example, that he might have done better to turn carpenter or revolutionist. Therefore, he is fully responsible for the interpretation. Forlornness implies that we ourselves choose our being. Forlornness and anguish go together.

As for despair, the term has a very simple meaning. It means that we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible. When we want something, we always have to reckon with probabilities. I may be counting on the arrival of a friend. The friend is coming by rail or street-car; this supposes that the train will arrive on schedule, or that the street-car will not jump the track. I am left in the realm of possibility; but possibilities are to be reckoned with only to the point where my action comports with the ensemble of these possibilities, and no further. The moment the possibilities I am considering are not rigorously involved by my action, I ought to disengage myself from them, because no God, no scheme, can adapt the world and its possibilities to my will. When Descartes said "Conquer yourself rather than the world," he meant essentially the same thing.

The Marxists to whom I have spoken reply, "You can rely on the support of others in your action, which obviously has certain limits because you're not going to live forever. That means: rely on both what others are doing elsewhere to help you, in China, in Russia, and what they will do later on, after your death, to carry on the action and lead it to its fulfillment, which will be the revolution. You even *have* to rely upon that, otherwise you're immoral." I reply at once that I will always rely

on fellow-fighters insofar as these comrades are involved with me in a common struggle, in the unity of a party or a group in which I can more or less make my weight felt; that is, one whose ranks I am in as a fighter and whose movements I am aware of at every moment. In such a situation, relying on the unity and will of the party is exactly like counting on the fact that the train will arrive on time or that the car won't jump the track. But, given that man is free and that there is no human nature for me to depend on, I can not count on men whom I do not know by relying on human goodness or man's concern for the good of society. I don't know what will become of the Russian revolution; I may make an example of it to the extent that at the present time it is apparent that the proletariat plays a part in Russia that it plays in no other nation. But I can't swear that this will inevitably lead to a triumph of the proletariat. I've got to limit myself to what I see.

Given that men are free and that tomorrow they will freely decide what man will be, I can not be sure that, after my death, fellow-fighters will carry on my work to bring it to its maximum perfection. Tomorrow, after my death, some men may decide to set up Fascism, and the others may be cowardly and muddled enough to let them do it. Fascism will then be the human reality, so much the worse for us.

Actually, things will be as man will have decided they are to be. Does that mean that I should abandon itself to quietism? No. First, I should involve myself; then, act on the old saw, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Nor does it mean that I shouldn't belong to a party, but rather that I shall have no illusions and shall do what I can. For example, suppose I ask myself, "Will socialization, as such, ever come about?" I know nothing about it. All I know is that I'm going to do everything in my power to bring it about. Beyond that, I can't count on anything. Quietism is the attitude of people who say, "Let others do what I can't do." The doctrine I am presenting is the very opposite of quietism, since it declares, "There is no reality except in action." Moreover, it goes further, since it adds, "Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life."

According to this, we can understand why our doctrine horrifies certain people. Because often the only way they can bear their wretchedness is to think, "Circumstances have been against me. What I've been and done doesn't show my true worth. To be sure, I've had no great love, no great friendship, but that's because I haven't met a man or woman who was worthy. The books I've written haven't been very good because I haven't had the proper leisure. I haven't had children to devote myself to because I didn't find a man with whom I could have spent my life. So

there remains within me, unused and quite viable, a host of propensities, inclinations, possibilities, that one wouldn't guess from the mere series of things I've done."

Now, for the existentialist there is really no love other than one which manifests itself in a person's being in love. There is no genius other than one which is expressed in works of art; the genius of Proust is the sum of Proust's works; the genius of Racine is his series of tragedies. Outside of that, there is nothing. Why say that Racine could have written another tragedy, when he didn't write it? A man is involved in life, leaves his impress on it, and outside of that there is nothing. To be sure, this may seem a harsh thought to someone whose life hasn't been a success. But, on the other hand, it prompts people to understand that reality alone is what counts, that dreams, expectations, and hopes warrant no more than to define a man as a disappointed dream, as miscarried hopes, as vain expectations. In other words, to define him negatively and not positively. However, when we say, "You are nothing else than your life," that does not imply that the artist will be judged solely on the basis of his works of art; a thousand other things will contribute toward summing him up. What we mean is that a man is nothing else than a series of undertakings, that he is the sum, the organization, the ensemble of the relationships which make up these undertakings.

When all is said and done, what we are accused of, at bottom, is not our pessimism, but an optimistic toughness. If people throw up to us our works of fiction in which we write about people who are soft, weak, cowardly, and sometimes even downright bad, it's not because these people are soft, weak, cowardly, or bad; because if we were to say, as Zola did, that they are that way because of heredity, the workings of environment, society, because of biological or psychological determinism, people would be reassured. They would say, "Well, that's what we're like, no one can do anything about it." But when the existentialist writes about a coward, he says that this coward is responsible for his cowardice. He's not like that because he has a cowardly heart or lung or brain; he's not like that on account of his physiological make-up; but he's like that because he has made himself a coward by his acts. There's no such thing as a cowardly constitution; there are nervous constitutions; there is poor blood, as the common people say, or strong constitutions. But the man whose blood is poor is not a coward on that account, for what makes cowardice is the act of renouncing or yielding. A constitution is not an act; the coward is defined on the basis of the acts he performs. People feel, in a vague sort of way, that this coward we're talking about is guilty of being a coward, and the thought frightens them. What people would like is that a coward or a hero be born that way.

One of the complaints most frequently made about *The Ways of Freedom*\* can be summed up as follows: "After all, these people are so spineless, how are you going to make heroes out of them?" This objection almost makes me laugh, for it assumes that people are born heroes. That's what people really want to think. If you're born cowardly, you may set your mind perfectly at rest; there's nothing you can do about it; you'll be cowardly all your life, whatever you may do. If you're born a hero, you may set your mind just as much at rest; you'll be a hero all your life; you'll drink like a hero and eat like a hero. What the existentialist says is that the coward makes himself cowardly, that the hero makes himself heroic. There's always a possibility for the coward not to be cowardly any more and for the hero to stop being heroic. What counts is total involvement; some one particular action or set of circumstances is not total involvement.

Thus, I think we have answered a number of the charges concerning existentialism. You see that it can not be taken for a philosophy of quietism, since it defines man in terms of action; nor for a pessimistic description of man—there is no doctrine more optimistic, since man's destiny is within himself; nor for an attempt to discourage man from acting, since it tells him that the only hope is in his acting and that action is the only thing that enables a man to live. Consequently, we are dealing here with an ethics of action and involvement.

Nevertheless, on the basis of a few notions like these, we are still charged with immuring man in this private subjectivity. There again we're very much misunderstood. Subjectivity of the individual is indeed our point of departure, and this for strictly philosophic reasons. Not because we are bourgeois, but because we want a doctrine based on truth and not a lot of fine theories, full of hope but with no real basis. There can be no other truth to take off from than this: *I think; therefore, I exist*. There we have the absolute truth of consciousness becoming aware of itself. Every theory which takes man out of the moment in which he becomes aware of himself is, at its very beginning, a theory which confounds truth, for outside the Cartesian *cogito*, all views are only probable, and a doctrine of probability which is not bound to a truth dissolves into thin air. In order to describe the probable, you must have a firm hold on the true. Therefore, before there can be any truth whatsoever, there must be an absolute truth; and this one is simple and easily arrived at; it's on everyone's doorstep; it's a matter of grasping it directly.

Secondly, this theory is the only one which gives man dignity, the only

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\* *Les Chemins de la Liberté*, M. Sartre's projected trilogy of novels, two of which, *L'Age de Raison* (*The Age of Reason*) and *Le Sursis* (*The Reprieve*) have already appeared.—Translator's note.

one which does not reduce him to an object. The effect of all materialism is to treat all men, including the one philosophizing, as objects, that is, as an ensemble of determined reactions in no way distinguished from the ensemble of qualities and phenomena which constitute a table or a chair or a stone. We definitely wish to establish the human realm as an ensemble of values distinct from the material realm. But the subjectivity that we have thus arrived at, and which we have claimed to be truth, is not a strictly individual subjectivity, for we have demonstrated that one discovers in the *cogito* not only himself, but others as well.

The philosophies of Descartes and Kant to the contrary, through the *I think* we reach our own self in the presence of others, and the others are just as real to us as our own self. Thus, the man who becomes aware of himself through the *cogito* also perceives all others, and he perceives them as the condition of his own existence. He realizes that he can not be anything (in the sense that we say that someone is witty or nasty or jealous) unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself. This being so, in discovering my inner being I discover the other person at the same time, like a freedom placed in front of me which thinks and wills only for or against me. Hence, let us at once announce the discovery of a world which we shall call intersubjectivity; this is the world in which man decides what he is and what others are.

Besides, if it is impossible to find in every man some universal essence which would be human nature, yet there does exist a universal human condition. It's not by chance that today's thinkers speak more readily of man's condition than of his nature. By condition they mean, more or less definitely, the *a priori* limits which outline man's fundamental situation in the universe. Historical situations vary; a man may be born a slave in a pagan society or a feudal lord or a proletarian. What does not vary is the necessity for him to exist in the world, to be at work there, to be there in the midst of other people, and to be mortal there. The limits are neither subjective nor objective, or, rather, they have an objective and a subjective side. Objective because they are to be found everywhere and are recognizable everywhere; subjective because they are *lived* and are nothing if man does not live them, that is, freely determine his existence with reference to them. And though the configurations may differ, at least none of them are completely strange to me, because they all appear as attempts either to pass beyond these limits or recede from them or deny them or adapt to them. Consequently, every configuration, however individual it may be, has a universal value.

Every configuration, even the Chinese, the Indian, or the Negro, can be

understood by a Westerner. "Can be understood" means that by virtue of a situation that he can imagine, a European of 1945 can, in like manner, push himself to his limits and reconstitute within himself the configuration of the Chinese, the Indian, or the African. Every configuration has universality in the sense that every configuration can be understood by every man. This does not at all mean that this configuration defines man forever, but that it can be met with again. There is always a way to understand the idiot, the child, the savage, the foreigner, provided one has the necessary information.

In this sense we may say that there is a universality of man; but it is not given, it is perpetually being made. I build the universal in choosing myself; I build it in understanding the configuration of every other man, whatever age he might have lived in. This absoluteness of choice does not do away with the relateness of each epoch. At heart, what existentialism shows is the connection between the absolute character of free involvement, by virtue of which every man realizes himself in realizing a type of mankind, an involvement always comprehensible in any age whatsoever and by any person whosoever, and the relateness of the cultural ensemble which may result from such a choice; it must be stressed that the relativity of Cartesianism and the absolute character of Cartesian involvement go together. In this sense, you may, if you like, say that each of us performs an absolute act in breathing, eating, sleeping, or behaving in any way whatever. There is no difference between being free, like a configuration, like an existence which chooses its essence, and being absolute. There is no difference between being an absolute temporarily localized, that is, localized in history, and being universally comprehensible.

This does not entirely settle the objection to subjectivism. In fact, the objection still takes several forms. First, there is the following: we are told, "So you're able to do anything, no matter what!" This is expressed in various ways. First we are accused of anarchy; then they say, "You're unable to pass judgment on others, because there's no reason to prefer one configuration to another"; finally they tell us, "Everything is arbitrary in this choosing of yours. You take something from one pocket and pretend you're putting it into the other."

These three objections aren't very serious. Take the first objection. "You're able to do anything, no matter what" is not to the point. In one sense choice is possible, but what is not possible is not to choose. I can always choose, but I ought to know that if I do not choose, I am still choosing. Though this may seem purely formal, it is highly important for keeping fantasy and caprice within bounds. If it is true that in facing a situation, for example, one in which, as a person capable of having sexual relations, of having children, I am obliged to choose an attitude,

and if I in any way assume responsibility for a choice which, in involving myself, also involves all mankind, this has nothing to do with caprice, even if no *a priori* value determines my choice.

If anybody thinks that he recognizes here Gide's theory of the arbitrary act, he fails to see the enormous difference between this doctrine and Gide's. Gide does not know what a situation is. He acts out of pure caprice. For us, on the contrary, man is in an organized situation in which he himself is involved. Through his choice, he involves all mankind, and he can not avoid making a choice: either he will remain chaste, or he will marry without having children, or he will marry and have children; anyhow, whatever he may do, it is impossible for him not to take full responsibility for the way he handles this problem. Doubtless, he chooses without referring to pre-established values, but it is unfair to accuse him of caprice. Instead, let us say that moral choice is to be compared to the making of a work of art. And before going any further, let it be said at once that we are not dealing here with an aesthetic ethics, because our opponents are so dishonest that they even accuse us of that. The example I've chosen is a comparison only.

Having said that, may I ask whether anyone has ever accused an artist who has painted a picture of not having drawn his inspiration from rules set up *a priori*? Has anyone ever asked, "What painting ought he to make?" It is clearly understood that there is no definite painting to be made, that the artist is engaged in the making of his painting, and that the painting to be made is precisely the painting he will have made. It is clearly understood that there are no *a priori* aesthetic values, but that there are values which appear subsequently in the coherence of the painting, in the correspondence between what the artist intended and the result. Nobody can tell what the painting of tomorrow will be like. Painting can be judged only after it has once been made. What connection does that have with ethics? We are in the same creative situation. We never say that a work of art is arbitrary. When we speak of a canvas of Picasso, we never say that it is arbitrary; we understand quite well that he was making himself what he is at the very time he was painting, that the ensemble of his work is embodied in his life.

The same holds on the ethical plane. What art and ethics have in common is that we have creation and invention in both cases. We can not decide *a priori* what there is to be done. I think that I pointed that out quite sufficiently when I mentioned the case of the student who came to see me, and who might have applied to all the ethical systems, Kantian or otherwise, without getting any sort of guidance. He was obliged to devise his law himself. Never let it be said by us that this man—who, taking affection, individual action, and kind-heartedness toward a specific



person as his ethical first principle, chooses to remain with his mother, or who, preferring to make a sacrifice, chooses to go to England—has made an arbitrary choice. Man makes himself. He isn't ready made at the start. In choosing his ethics, he makes himself, and force of circumstances is such that he can not abstain from choosing one. We define man only in relationship to involvement. It is therefore absurd to charge us with arbitrariness of choice.

In the second place, it is said that we are unable to pass judgment on others. In a way this is true, and in another way, false. It is true in this sense, that, whenever a man sanely and sincerely involves himself and chooses his configuration, it is impossible for him to prefer another configuration, regardless of what his own may be in other respects. It is true in this sense, that we do not believe in progress. Progress is betterment. Man is always the same. The situation confronting him varies. Choice always remains a choice in a situation. The problem has not changed since the time one could choose between those for and those against slavery, for example, at the time of the Civil War, and the present time, when one can side with the Maquis Resistance Party, or with the Communists.

But, nevertheless, one can still pass judgment, for, as I have said, one makes a choice in relationship to others. First, one can judge (and this is perhaps not a judgment of value, but a logical judgment) that certain choices are based on error and others on truth. If we have defined man's situation as a free choice, with no excuses and no recourse, every man who takes refuge behind the excuse of his passions, every man who sets up a determinism, is a dishonest man.

The objection may be raised, "But why mayn't he choose himself dishonestly?" I reply that I am not obliged to pass moral judgment on him, but that I do define his dishonesty as an error. One can not help considering the truth of the matter. Dishonesty is obviously a falsehood because it belies the complete freedom of involvement. On the same grounds, I maintain that there is also dishonesty if I choose to state that certain values exist prior to me; it is self-contradictory for me to want them and at the same state that they are imposed on me. Suppose someone says to me, "What if I want to be dishonest?" I'll answer, "There's no reason for you not to be, but I'm saying that that's what you are, and that the strictly coherent attitude is that of honesty."

Besides, I can bring moral judgment to bear. When I declare that freedom in every concrete circumstance can have no other aim than to want itself, if man has once become aware that in his forlornness he imposes values, he can no longer want but one thing, and that is freedom, as the basis of all values. That doesn't mean that he wants it in the abstract.

It means simply that the ultimate meaning of the acts of honest men is the quest for freedom as such. A man who belongs to a communist or revolutionary union wants concrete goals; these goals imply an abstract desire for freedom; but this freedom is wanted in something concrete. We want freedom for freedom's sake and in every particular circumstance. And in wanting freedom we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on ours. Of course, freedom as the definition of man does not depend on others, but as soon as there is involvement, I am obliged to want others to have freedom at the same time that I want my own freedom. I can take freedom as my goal only if I take that of others as a goal as well. Consequently, when, in all honesty, I've recognized that man is a being in whom existence precedes essence, that he is a free being who, in various circumstances, can want only his freedom, I have at the same time recognized that I can want only the freedom of others.

Therefore, in the name of this will for freedom, which freedom itself implies, I may pass judgment on those who seek to hide from themselves the complete arbitrariness and the complete freedom of their existence. Those who hide their complete freedom from themselves out of a spirit of seriousness or by means of deterministic excuses, I shall call cowards; those who try to show that their existence was necessary, when it is the very contingency of man's appearance on earth, I shall call stinkers. But cowards or stinkers can be judged only from a strictly unbiased point of view.

Therefore though the content of ethics is variable, a certain form of it is universal. Kant says that freedom desires both itself and the freedom of others. Granted. But he believes that the formal and the universal are enough to constitute an ethics. We, on the other hand, think that principles which are too abstract run aground in trying to decide action. Once again, take the case of the student. In the name of what, in the name of what great moral maxim do you think he could have decided, in perfect peace of mind, to abandon his mother or to stay with her? There is no way of judging. The content is always concrete and thereby unforeseeable; there is always the element of invention. The one thing that counts is knowing whether the inventing that has been done, has been done in the name of freedom.

For example, let us look at the following two cases. You will see to what extent they correspond, yet differ. Take *The Mill on the Floss*. We find a certain young girl, Maggie Tulliver, who is an embodiment of the value of passion and who is aware of it. She is in love with a young man, Stephen, who is engaged to an insignificant young girl. This Maggie Tulliver, instead of heedlessly preferring her own happiness, chooses,

in the name of human solidarity, to sacrifice herself and give up the man she loves. On the other hand, Sanseverina, in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, believing that passion is man's true value, would say that a great love deserves sacrifices; that it is to be preferred to the banality of the conjugal love that would tie Stephen to the young ninny he had to marry. She would choose to sacrifice the girl and fulfill her happiness; and, as Stendhal shows, she is even ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of passion, if this life demands it. Here we are in the presence of two strictly opposed moralities. I claim that they are much the same thing; in both cases what has been set up as the goal is freedom.

You can imagine two highly similar attitudes: one girl prefers to renounce her love out of resignation; another prefers to disregard the prior attachment of the man she loves out of sexual desire. On the surface these two actions resemble those we've just described. However, they are completely different. Sanseverina's attitude is much nearer that of Maggie Tulliver, one of heedless rapacity.

Thus, you see that the second charge is true and, at the same time, false. One may choose anything if it is on the grounds of free involvement. The third objection is the following: "You take something from one pocket and put it into the other. That is, fundamentally, values aren't serious, since you choose them." My answer to this is that I'm quite vexed that that's the way it is; but if I've discarded God the Father, there has to be someone to invent values. You've got to take things as they are. Moreover, to say that we invent values means nothing else but this: life has no meaning *a priori*. Before you come alive, life is nothing; it's up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing else but the meaning that you choose. In that way, you see, there is a possibility of creating a human community.

I've been reproached for asking whether existentialism is humanistic. It's been said, "But you said in *Nausea* that the humanists were all wrong. You made fun of a certain kind of humanist. Why come back to it now?" Actually, the word humanism has two very different meanings. By humanism one can mean a theory which takes man as an end and as a higher value. Humanism in this sense can be found in Cocteau's tale *Around the World in Eighty Hours* when a character, because he is flying over some mountains in an airplane, declares "Man is simply amazing." That means that I, who did not build the airplanes, shall personally benefit from these particular inventions, and that I, as man, shall personally consider myself responsible for, and honored by, acts of a few particular men. This would imply that we ascribe a value to man on the basis of the highest deeds of certain men. This humanism is absurd, because only the dog or the horse would be able to make such an over-all

judgment about man, which they are careful not to do, at least to my knowledge.

But it can not be granted that a man may make a judgment about man. Existentialism spares him from any such judgment. The existentialist will never consider man as an end because he is always in the making. Nor should we believe that there is a mankind to which we might set up a cult in the manner of Auguste Comte. The cult of mankind ends in the self-enclosed humanism of Comte, and, let it be said, of fascism. This kind of humanism we can do without.

But there is another meaning of humanism. Fundamentally it is this: man is constantly outside of himself; in projecting himself, in losing himself outside of himself, he makes for man's existing; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist; man, being this state of passing-beyond, and seizing upon things only as they bear upon this passing-beyond, is at the heart, at the center of this passing-beyond. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This connection between transcendency, as a constituent element of man—not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of passing beyond—and subjectivity, in the sense that man is not closed in on himself but is always present in a human universe, is what we call existentialism humanism. Humanism, because we remind man that there is no law-maker other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself; because we point out that man will fulfill himself as man, not in turning toward himself, but in seeking outside of himself a goal which is just this liberation, just this particular fulfillment.

From these few reflections it is evident that nothing is more unjust than the objections that have been raised against us. Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. It isn't trying to plunge man into despair at all. But if one calls every attitude of unbelief despair, like the Christians, then the word is not being used in its original sense. Existentialism isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing. There you've got our point of view. Not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the problem of His existence is not the issue. In this sense existentialism is optimistic, a doctrine of action, and it is plain dishonesty for Christians to make no distinction between their own despair and ours and then to call us despairing.

HELMUT KUHN

## Illumination through Anguish\*

THE FOUNTAINHEAD of the Existentialist teaching on crisis is in Hegel, especially in the youthful Hegel who underwent the influence of his friend, Hölderlin. For Hegel the prototype of crisis is the cleavage of mind (*Zerrissenheit*; *déchirement* in modern French writers) suffered by the Jews previous to the coming of Christ. God was then manifest to His chosen people as an exacting law. Measured by its stern demand, natural man appeared in perpetual rebellion against his Maker. There was no mediation between the Divine "thou shalt" and the human avowal of impotence: "I cannot". In his formative years Hegel experienced and interpreted this unhappy condition in terms of Kant's philosophy against which he battled even while succumbing to it. In Kant, too, the moral law was the antithesis to the unreconciled cupidity of natural man. So the unhappiness of the dissatisfied Kantian (his own unhappiness) became fused in Hegel's mind with the wretchedness of the chosen but unredeemed people. This was the "existential" problem that lay at the root of Hegel's philosophical growth.

The solution of the Jewish-Kantian crisis, according to Hegel's early theological writings, is brought about by Love incarnate in Christ. Through Love, life, torn asunder, is healed and made one. The feud between law and mutinous flesh is reconciled in the divine Mediator. This does not mean, in Hegel's opinion, that the strife of concupiscence warring in man's limbs against spiritual man, is composed once and for all. He rather conceives of the reconciliation through Christ as a paragon or prototype and, at the same, as the initiation of an historical process of universal scope and millennial duration. The paragon, he thought, needs to be embodied in the society of men, its cultural and political life,

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\* From *Encounter with Nothingness*, by Helmut Kuhn, Chapter VIII, pp. 124-146. Henry Regnery Company, 1949. Reprinted by permission.

and many nations in succession have to labor and suffer in order to make the Son of God an historical reality. His own philosophy Hegel regarded as instrumental in this second, progressive incarnation which was history. Through dialectic he endeavored to think the mediation that was lived by Christ. But since thinking is itself a way of living, the dialectical system must claim to be part of the Incarnation itself, the execution of its meaning in the sphere of speculative thought. Synthesis, the mediating element in Hegel's dialectic, is the logical counterpart to Christ. Man in the role of the philosopher, this seems implied in the Hegelian view, can be saved only by dialectic.

Kierkegaard's thought is largely a protest against Hegel. He emphatically denies the possibility of mediation through synthesis and, therewith, the very principle of Hegel's dialectic. But in rejecting Hegel's idea of the solution of the crisis, he yet retains Hegel's idea of the crisis, and this is a very significant retention. It marks Kierkegaard as an Hegelian, though a rebellious one. His position is dependent on the rationalist-dialectical thesis to which it is an antithesis.

Hegel's idea of crisis centers upon the polarity of disintegration and reintegration. The symptom of crisis is a painful lack of unity so that restoration (through Christ, and then through philosophy) will be looked forward to as a synthesis. This, however, is not the full Christian view of crisis and salvation. The poles around which the latter swings are remoteness from God in sin, and nearness to God in vision and love. This vision and this love, it is true, engender unity, just as sin is destructive of unity. But by choosing the integrating power of love for his key concept, Hegel robs the crisis of its transcendent reference. Christ, in his early interpretations, is not so much the Son of God who became man and died to save sinners as the avatar of the healing powers of life. So the Christology of the youthful Hegel paves the way for a pantheistic system of dialectic.

Kierkegaard rejects this Christology as well as this dialectic. But he does not radically transform the idea of crisis. He only conceives of it as insoluble. His dialectic is the Hegelian dialectic arrested after the second move. For Hegel's rationalist intellectualism he substitutes an irrationalist intellectualism. His philosophically transformed dialectic leads into an impasse. As a matter of fact, to lead into a philosophical impasse and, in this manner, to get rid of philosophy—this is Kierkegaard's intent. If, however, Kierkegaard's analyses are understood as an attempt to purge the mind of philosophy, we should not ascribe a philosophical dignity to those concepts which circumscribe the experience of crisis. In talking about nothingness, freedom, *Angst*, leap, and the like, he uses, we may then assume, a semiphilosophical language to describe an actual

experience. He makes a contribution to psychology rather than to philosophy.

In point of fact Kierkegaard's arguments move in a disturbing twilight. There is a shifting to and fro from philosophical intent to psychological analysis. But this remark does not apply to modern Existential philosophy. In its chief representatives, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre, the philosophical will is dominant. We therefore misunderstand the ideas of crisis and the overcoming of crisis through choice if we take them as descriptive of certain experiences gone through only by certain individuals but so typically human as to be understood by all. Nor is it the primary purpose of this contemporary crisis theory to outline rules of conduct by enlightening us on the way in which certain inner difficulties are successfully overcome. The fundamental contention is rather that in passing through that crisis an insight into Being is acquired—and this implies an insight into man's place in the world. The winning of a position "beyond" the abyss of Nothingness is to involve a vision impervious to that critical analysis which helps to induce the crisis. This invulnerable vision is rather to emerge out of the crisis, and it must be seized by the saving act of choice. "To will freedom, and to will the unveiling of Being—this is one and the same choice," Simone de Beauvoir affirms ("Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté," *Les Temps Modernes*, II [16 Jan. 1947], p. 641).

Like Whitehead, like the Pragmatists and, we may add, like any genuine philosophy, Existentialism tries to undercut the convenient psychological distinction between knowing and willing. Psychology presupposes an idea of man as being dependent for his survival on a certain social and natural environment. The patterns of behavior of this living being can be studied along with the corresponding faculties, and this study may be classified as either psychology or anthropology. But the philosopher is guided by a different interest and he asks a different question. Instead of accepting such an idea of man as is offered to him partly by common experience, partly by the specialized sciences, he subjects this idea to a radical examination. He asks: What is man? What is the meaning of "to be"? And what is experience? The convenient definition of distinct faculties breaks down under the weight of these questions. We are forced into a depth below the differentiation of volition and intellection.

The first volume of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* does not include an ethics. But just as little is it to be described as an epistemology, anthropology, or cosmology. The "fundamental ontology" here attempted is logically prior to these classifications. Though it does not expound an ethics, it implies one. Every move of the argument by which a picture of human existence (*Dasein*) in the world gradually emerges is, at the same time,

an effort towards authenticity of existence. This is a philosophizing not merely about crisis but out of crisis, an intellectual manifestation of that freedom which is fully actualized only in the agony of absolute despair. Though there is not much explicit reference to crisis in *Sein und Zeit*, it is presupposed throughout. *Sein* (Being) and *Dasein* (human existence) as analyzed in this work are seen in "the clear night of the nothingness of *Angst*" (*Was ist Metaphysik?* [Bonn, 1929], p. 18). The claim is made that only an anguished vision can reveal truth. For Heidegger as well as for Sartre, freedom, far from being expressed in actions alone, is manifest in all acts including the acts of knowledge. Freedom, Heidegger asserts, "is the origin of the *principium rationis*"—the principle according to which nothing is without a "reason" or "ground" (*Vom Wesen des Grundes*, Halle, 1929, p. 38). The world such as it discloses itself to human apprehension proceeds from human freedom, though, of course, it is not created by man.

What is the nature of this peculiar kind of philosophical knowledge which not only stands the acid test of existential analysis but whose light requires to be kindled in the darkness of the crisis of despair? Both the method which guides this knowledge and the impulse which actuates it are furnished by Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology. Heidegger as well as Sartre are Phenomenologists just as much as they are Existentialists. This does not mean that Phenomenology is a root of Existentialism in the same sense as Kierkegaard. Jaspers, for example, owes little or nothing to it. But only through the fusion of Kierkegaard's crisis with phenomenological intuition did Existentialism develop into a philosophically significant school of thought. Thanks to Phenomenology, the *Angst* of crisis becomes philosophically perceptive.

The contribution of Phenomenology will be dealt with under three headings: (1) the "return to the things," (2) the *epoché* or reduction, and (3) the idea of intentionality. Husserl, like Whitehead a mathematician before he became a philosopher, a sober and rigorous mind inflamed by the desire to raise philosophy to the status of an exact science, was utterly antagonistic to Existentialist aspirations. Yet under each of the three headings an affinity of his Phenomenology to Existentialism will reveal itself.

(1) The battle cry of Phenomenology in the first phase of its history (during the twelve years that intervened between the publication of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, 1900–1901, and the *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie*, 1913) is "back to the things" (*Zurück zu den Sachen!*). The "things" a return to which is demanded are phenomena—not, however, phenomena in contrast to *noumena* or "things in themselves," but simply things such as they show themselves to unbiased inspection. Accordingly, that from



which a retreat is recommended—the target of the critical protest—is the sedimentations of an outworn philosophical tradition, encumbering the mind and blocking the unprejudiced statement of apprehended data. Phenomenology proclaims an act of emancipation. This is its first point of affinity to existential philosophy. Just as Existentialism begins with a destructive analysis of philosophical and especially metaphysical tradition, so Phenomenology, though in a very different mood and with different intent, performs a cleansing operation.

Among the conceptual relics cleared away by the phenomenological purge there are the dichotomies of subject and object, thing-in-itself and phenomenon, individual and general—convenient disjunctions overworked by facile use in the neo-Kantian and Positivist schools. There is no question of eliminating these terms or denying their usefulness. What Phenomenology objects to is their careless employment for purposes of philosophical construction. The method of construction itself, requiring as it does large concepts which may turn out to be philosophical fossils, is subjected to critical scrutiny, and in its place a new open-mindedness is cultivated. We are to see “that which is,” combining sensitiveness to every nuance in the field of intellectual vision with restraint in generalization and dialectical construction. “Intuition” (*Anschaung*), a favorite term with phenomenological writers, has no mystic overtones. It simply denotes the attention focused upon that which offers itself to our awareness as immediately present.

A counter example may best illustrate the point. In an attempt to prove the logical respectability of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (“study of cultural life”) Heinrich Rickert, head of the Southwestern School of German neo-Kantianism, wrote a book on the *Limitations of the Methods of Natural Science* (*Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, 1896-1902). The argument is typically unphenomenological in a threefold sense. In the first place, it begins and ends with a stubbornly pursued dichotomy: generalizing knowledge (natural science) *versus* individualizing knowledge (study of cultural life), thus imposing a simple logical pattern upon a complex situation. Second, a methodological distinction is carried out with little regard for either nature or history as prescientific data. The philosopher is interested in the sciences rather than the things with which the sciences deal. Third, knowledge, instead of being taken for what it offers itself in reflexive experience—a seeing or intuiting of that which is present to the mind—is subjected to an idealist interpretation. Knowing becomes thus assimilated to making or constructing. Thought, out of touch with experience and reality, suffocates in the thin air of abstract methodology, and liberation through a phenomenological catharsis appears as an urgent demand. On the other hand, thinkers like Wilhelm

Dilthey and Gabriel Marcel are "phenomenological" in their approach, though they owe little or nothing to Husserl's Phenomenology. Not all were equally in need of this liberator.

Paul Claudel's maxim, "just listen and you may hear," expresses well the ethos of phenomenological research. We remember that the destructive existential analysis, prelude to the encounter with Nothingness, involves a constructive element. *Vers le Concret* (1932)—"towards the concrete"—is the revealing title of a book by Jean Wahl, precursor, interpreter, and critic of French Existentialism. In undermining objective truth, this analysis develops an idea of the concrete individual, living in a concrete situation and knowing himself as a person through his dual relatedness to the world and his fellow men—the "thou" in relation to which he knows himself as "I." The object-directedness and intellectual sensitiveness which Heidegger and Sartre inherited from the founder of Phenomenology enabled them to develop their philosophical anthropology. Sartre, less original than Heidegger, is to a still higher degree a typical Phenomenologist of the Husserl tradition. His descriptive analyses of the nature of sense perception, of the body which the individual not only "has" but "is," and of the individual's relationship to "the other" belong among the finest specimens of phenomenological research.

A curious contradiction is involved in the phenomenological purge. Those encumbrances which it sweeps away are the ossified relics of a metaphysical or analogical conception of reason. Yet Husserl, far from leaning towards irrationalism, is animated by an unbroken confidence in reason's ability to attain to valid knowledge. His Phenomenology, too, expresses a crisis—a crisis, however, not of existence but of reason.

As metaphysicians we will argue that there must be a correspondence or analogy between the reality to be known and the knowledge of it. Chaos is by definition unintelligible. Likewise, a heap of things blown together by the winds of chance is intelligible only within narrow limits. In order to become the objects of rational knowledge, revelatory of a meaningful whole, reality must be intrinsically intelligible or rational. This, then, is what we call the metaphysical or analogical concept of reason; far from being just one faculty among others, reason, on the strength of our argument, must be conceived as that specifically human power whose operation in a unique way corresponds (or is analogically related) to the structural principle of reality.

This metaphysical concept of reason can be (but need not be) based on a theological foundation. It has been actually so based through centuries of Christian metaphysics, and it disintegrated when the foundation crumbled. It was then replaced by an idealistic interpretation. The structural principle of reality (its intrinsic rationality) was no longer

thought of as existing independently of man but as deriving its order in one way or another from the constructive operation of the human mind. The idea of correspondence was not discarded altogether but weakened and reduced to concepts such as the harmony of intelligences in Leibniz and Berkeley or, in the Kantian tradition, the hypothesis of a superindividual transcendental subject. It was the latter hypothesis, coarsened frequently by psychological interpretation, which struck Husserl as a hindrance to impartial analysis, especially in logic, and at which the criticism of the *Logische Untersuchungen* was leveled. But here the contradiction occurred. It was very well to disencumber vision by eliminating unexamined and blindly accepted hypotheses. The problem of reason, however—that is, the problem as to whether, how, and in what sense our ideas have a bearing on reality—would stay with us. As long as it remained unanswered, the phenomena intuited by the Phenomenologist were, so to speak, “in the air,” unattached to a sustaining reality and insufficiently linked to one another. Husserl was well aware of this difficulty, as we shall presently see.

(2) The solution to the problem of reason as worked out by Husserl became the foundation of Phenomenology in its second phase, opening with the publication of *Ideen*. This brings us to the much-debated phenomenological *epoché*.

The difficulty before us is not simply discarded but utilized and developed into a method of meditation. The disturbing factor once more is the question of reality. How do the phenomenological data intuited by us bear upon the things in so far as they *exist*? Let us, Husserl suggests, deliberately and methodically remove this disturbing problem from our field of vision. Remove does not mean neglect but suspend. We “bracket” the question of existence by withholding judgment regarding it. This act is called *epoché* (ἐποχή) or reduction. With its help the true field of phenomenological research discloses itself. Thanks to it we are free to let our glance wander over a realm of pure meanings (*Bedeutungen*, *significations*) and there to discover stable structural features or essences. These essences can be studied as they are, both by themselves and in their relation to other essences, untainted, in any case, by the question of existence.

This splitting up of experience into pure significations and essences on the one hand, and existence on the other paves the way for Existentialism. The Existentialist concept of an anguished vision, a cognition won through, and out of, crisis, can be regarded as an inverted interpretation of Husserl's *epoché*.

Through *epoché* Husserl and his followers try to overcome the “natural attitude” which, dominated as it is by practical interest, emphasizes the “existential” rather than the “essential” aspect of experience. But the adop-

tion of *epoché* has in turn an "existential" significance in the narrower sense of the word. It too requires some kind of "conversion"—a turning around of the whole mind. It is an enfeebled copy of the Platonic contemplation which is vision animated by loving assimilation to the objects. It involves a putting out of gear of the practical self, a detachment or self-extrication—and this is the point where the Existentialist transformation begins.

The Existentialist repudiates the claims of disinterested contemplation, and to that extent he must reverse the tendency of *epoché*. Instead of lifting us out of existence into the sphere of essences, he would make us wise by pushing us into the burning center of existence, the crisis of despair. Yet in this inverted procedure of existential analysis, there is also detachment, though of a very different kind. For Husserl, detachment is something between a methodical contrivance and an aspiration to contemplative aloofness. For the Existentialist it is a catastrophe known to us under the name of estrangement. The methodological disengagement of *epoché* is supplanted with tragic alienation culminating in the drama of crisis.

In spite of the contrast of direction, the result in the two cases is strikingly similar. Above all, the illumination through the detachment of crisis, like the detachment through *epoché*, throws its light exclusively on phenomena in the sense of meanings or significations. No contact with a real world existing previous to and independent of the individual is claimed. In fact, any such claim would be invalidated in advance by estrangement which obliterates the world as cosmos. At the same time, the vision obtained through crisis and animated by *Angst* is by no means illusory and of merely private significance. But its truth, understood as the revealedness of phenomena, is, in the last analysis, subjective truth. It receives its authentication from the existing individual. While it is continually to be tested with reference to phenomena, its ultimate validity depends upon the authenticity of the existence which it expresses. And this fulcrum offered by existence furnishes also a systematizing or organizing principle. By being viewed as mine, the individual's, the scattered essences of the early Phenomenologists fall into a pattern supplied by the ordering operations of the mind. Such an organizing principle is still woefully lacking in the Phenomenology of the second phase, and Husserl in a third phase of this thinking (especially in the *Méditations Cartésiennes*, 1932), tries in vain to fill this want by having recourse to a transcendental subject. In this respect the Existentialist version of Phenomenology proves superior by its ability to establish a unified whole of interpretation. But must we not suspect that this advantage is dearly paid for by a subjective idealism verging on solipsism?

In order to answer this question we must turn to a consideration of intentionality, the third constituent feature of Phenomenology.

(3) The idea of "intention" and intentionality has its historical home in Scholasticism. Franz Brentano, Husserl's teacher, revived it for modern philosophy. In all its acts, according to Husserl, the mind "intends" something, and intentionality is the fundamental structure of mental life. Perceiving we perceive something, desiring we desire something, angered we are angry at something, our joy is rejoicing over something, and so through the whole gamut of the mind's activities. The cognitive acts are no exception to this general rule. Thinking or knowing we think or know something. Accordingly, we can distinguish throughout the act of knowing (*noësis*) from the thing-as-known (*noëma*). The former can be likened to a shaft of light, the latter to the illuminated spot in which the shaft terminates.

Regarding the question of idealism or realism, the idea of intentionality is ambiguous. It can be argued that it provides a basis for the realist position by showing that it is of the nature of the mind to be occupied with something other than the mind. But again this passing beyond itself admits of an immanentist interpretation as though the mind, instead of meeting objects, produced them by inner necessity. Husserl, however, maintaining the point of view of *epoché*, can keep this problem in abeyance. He is concerned with meanings and essences, and the question of existence is not allowed to interfere with phenomenological clarification.

We have likened the "intending" act of the mind to a shaft of light, a metaphor which may once more prove useful. We imagine this as having its greatest luminosity at the center and shading off towards the periphery. The illuminated spot on the screen will then show a brightly lit core surrounded by a halo or horizon of dimmer light which at the circumference gradually melts into darkness. The central core of light, in this simile, stands for that which is directly intended, in other words, for the focus of attention; the concentric rings of the evanescent halo for what is "co-intended." In writing, for example, my attention is focused on the idea to be clarified and expressed in words, while a lateral ray of consciousness picks out for me the paper, the pencil, the letter which I try to draw as clearly as I can. But this central field of apprehension is bathed, so to speak, in the dim and yet pervasive light of a wider awareness. While I am concentrating on my writing I am cognizant, by what Sartre calls *connaissance non-thétique*, of my personal identity, of my past life and the prospects of my future, of this body which is "mine" in a sense which alone makes all other ownership possible, of my staying in a village in New England, and finally of my being a man, a member of human society and living in the world. In the life of the mind nothing is external to anything else. All those horizons of co-intended meanings, and first and foremost (though last in the succession of discoveries) the ultimate horizon of

"my-being-in-the-world," permeate and shape the sharply outlined and narrowly circumscribed group of objects I am attending to now.

It is one of the achievements of Phenomenology to call attention to the semiconscious and subconscious elements which go into the making of our cognitive life. One may find herein a kinship to psychoanalysis. But the aim of phenomenological research is rather antagonistic to that of psychoanalytic procedure. While the latter detects functional dependencies of thought upon subconscious drives, the Phenomenologist, on the contrary, is interested in the cognitive significance of acts which are not explicitly cognitive. He finds awareness embedded in feelings, moods, and attitudes. So the idea of intentionality, the constructive element of phenomenological method, is widened and enriched with a new perceptiveness by the concept of the horizon as the co-intended. Neither Heidegger's nor Sartre's work is imaginable without that methodological tool forged for them by Husserl. Of course, his lessons had to be adapted to the new Existentialist purpose. In the process of adaptation, Heidegger developed out of Husserl's intentionality two new concepts: projection (*Entwurf*) and transcendence. Both were to become fundamental, first in Heidegger's thought, and then in that of Sartre.

Project is Husserl's intentionality made dynamic and expansive by transfer from the aloofness of *epoché* to the center of existence which is crisis and anguish.

Suppose I plan to build a house. That is to say, I "intend" the house as something-to-be, and I call this creative anticipation "project." Every step towards actualizing the plan will then be guided and determined by the project. In other words, the one dominant intention will encompass and organize the partial intentions presiding over the various acts through which the plan is being carried out. We may still refer to the dominant intention as the "horizon"—the outer sphere of co-intendedness, but the simile of the cone of light requires qualification to be applicable. For the encompassing intention, the project, while it may recede into the twilight of mere co-intendedness (once construction is under way, we need consult the blueprint only intermittently), is yet the formative principle. The illuminated field is organized from the periphery towards the center. The more determining factors are those which move least frequently into the focus of attention.

Our illustration is taken from the technological sphere. Building is a way of dealing with things under the guidance of a purpose. For Heidegger, and after him for Sartre, this sphere is representative of the way in which the environing world (*Umwelt*) is generally disclosed to man. It reveals itself, as a powerful chapter in *Sein und Zeit* (pp. 66-113) shows, not as a collection of objects but as something to deal with, as the stuff

out of which something can be made, as *Zeug*, as a "totality of utensils" (*L'être et le néant*, p. 251). In its analysis of the natural world picture, Existentialism appears as a radical pragmatism.

We miss the point in Heidegger's and Sartre's argument if we think of "building" in our illustration as a practice in contradistinction to theory. The activities of making, using, constructing, and the like; in short, the purposive dealing with things, must be thought of as animated by its own awareness. As we have learnt on a former occasion (pp. 46-47) the hammer is perceived as "something with which to hammer," the land surface of the globe as a habitable continent, the river as a frontier or an artery of traffic. The nature of the utensil with its characteristic teleological structure (the "*um . . . willen*," that is, "for the sake of . . ." which determines all doing) extends, according to Heidegger and Sartre, over the whole of experience. So the idea of project, developed by means of a technological illustration, the construction of a building, can be universalized. Instead of saying with Husserl that I am aware of my explaining and writing down a philosophical thought "within the horizon of the world," I may now, with a shift of language to Heidegger, prefer to say "within the world as projected by me." Thus the idea of horizon, just like that of intentionality, becomes dynamic by being put in touch with that center of power which is Man in Existence.

Experience as a projected whole is for Heidegger structured and unified by a purposive intent—the "for the sake of . . ." or "with a view to. . ." This structure, like every teleological arrangement, requires an ultimate, unifying principle, an end towards which aspiration is directed, or an ultimate object for the sake of which everything else is done. In the Platonic tradition the constructive principle is afforded by the Sovereign Good; in Existentialism by existing man, or Existence in the emphatic sense of the word. The formula, "Man as existing projects the world in which he finds himself" can now be transformed into: "Man as existing projects himself as a being in the world." The outgoing movement of projection—the movement through which world is revealed or through which it "worlds" (*weltet*)—returns upon its point of departure, the self. The existing self is that ultimate end for the sake of which world is unveiled. Self-projection, involving as it does projection of a world, is identical with self-choice. And this self-choice is, as we remember, the choosing of despair. The vision of the world as self-projection sheds upon things the somber clarity of disillusionment or despair. The illumination which it brings on is the illumination of anguish.

World and existence as revealed to this vision are permeated by Nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*), and the seal of Nothingness for every living individual, according to Heidegger, is his own death, certain as fact but

uncertain as to its date and therefore ever present. Only by resolutely anticipating death—every one his own death—do we acquire the double gain: a truthful vision of the world projected unto Nothingness, and self-possession in the authenticity of existence. The gain is not easily won. With violent determination the individual must emancipate himself from the superficiality of what people (“*man*”) think and say, the “public prattle” (*öffentliches Gerede*) that covers up reality. He must train himself to see all by himself his own death and, through death, truth. The undaunted acceptance of his finiteness is to open his eyes. Heidegger does not have the accents of languor with which the longing for death is expressed in Novalis or Rilke. He rather seems to commandeer our thoughts into a macabre discipline.

The individual, in projecting himself, can arrive at himself only through an enormous detour. In making this detour he projects the world. So it is also true to say, according to *Sein und Zeit*, that man arrives at himself only through the world. But just as the world as cosmos or creation is ambivalent—a ladder towards God as well as a temptation which arrests ascent—so also this Heideggerian mock-world. Its temptation consists in the false pretense of objectivity with which it confronts us. It becomes instrumental in self-choice only as we see through its puffed-up nullity (*Nichtigkeit*) to discover and face Nought itself.

So the self presents itself as a movement away from itself—and this movement must be curbed and forced to return upon its point of departure. In this “away from itself” a phenomenological observation and an existential motif are blended. The phenomenological observation is the one that underlies the idea of intentionality and its successor-term, project. The self, as Heidegger puts it (and Sartre follows suit) is “ek-static,” and this “tending beyond itself” unfolds itself as time, the fundamental mode under which world exists. The Existentialist world, like creation in metaphysics, is temporality, not, however, as the “moving likeness of eternity” (in Plato’s famous phrase, *Timaeus* 37d) but as the externalization (the “worlding”) of “ek-static” existence. There is no eternity for Heidegger. As A. N. Whitehead titled his chief work *Process and Reality*, so Heidegger called his *magnum opus*: *Being and Time*, for which he later, changing the word order, wrote: *Time and Being* (*Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den Humanismus!* [Bern, 1947], p. 72). The two titles are almost interchangeable. Both Whitehead and Heidegger express an emphatic denial of static Being in favor of a dynamic reality. But in Whitehead the world process embraces human existence, in Heidegger it *is* human existence. This centrifugal, “ek-static” move of projection, cosmogonic in significance and phenomenological in origin, is then subjected to an existential interpretation. Heidegger speaks of the



*Verfallen* of existence—"a falling away from itself and coming under the spell of what it is not"—and Sartre of the "flight" (*la fuite*) of the For-itself (*le pour-soi*) into the By-itself (*l'en-soi*).

A similar welding of phenomenological description with Existentialist interpretation is found in Heidegger's conception of care (*Sorge*). Existence, according to him, is essentially care. On the one hand, this is another expression for the utensil character of the projected world. The perceptive attitude towards this world is a "taking care of" (*besorgen*) something. On the other hand, this outgoing, formative movement is returning upon itself as a "caring for . . ." in the sense of "concern for. . . ." And the ultimate object of concern for existence is existence itself.

Even the term transcendence is forcibly bent by Heidegger so as to fit the circularity of existence. Literally transcendence means a "stepping across" or a "passing beyond." That which is overstepped in the move of transcendence is, according to traditional metaphysics, the sensible world or nature, and the goal of the movement is God. Heidegger makes the same term mean the passing of existence beyond itself to objects other than itself. So it becomes closely linked with the idea of projection, and it must follow the reflexive curve of this its twin concept. That is to say, the goal of the transcending movement is not in the world of objects but in the self. Existence transcending itself traverses the world to return to itself.

Heidegger has repeatedly repudiated the imputation of atheism, in *Vom Wesen des Grundes* (p. 28, note) and more recently in an interview where he said that, while not denying God, he stated his absence: "My philosophy is a waiting for God" (*Partisan Review*, April 1948, p. 511). We need not quarrel with this assertion. But we must note that it is difficult to imagine a more effective exclusion of God from human vision than is achieved in *Sein und Zeit*. The idea of transcendence, ancient bridge connecting this world with God, is so twisted as to become the basis of finitism. The circuit of power that is to proceed from God to His creatures and back to Him is enclosed within the walls of human finitude. In Kierkegaard's terms, this is a philosophical expression of the demonic, the language of passion locked up in the chamber of inwardness.

Sartre accepts Heidegger's method and conclusions with a number of modifications. The most important of these is the incorporation of a dialectical scheme in the Heideggerian system of "projections"—a trait which confers upon Sartre's work a tinge of Hegelianism. Actually, Sartre is closer to Fichte than to Hegel. As Fichte in the *Wissenschaftslehre* begins with the ego that produces the non-ego and then makes these two terms operate against each other and progressively determine each

other in a dialectical seesaw, so Sartre uses being-as-object, or the In-itself, and being-as-subject, or the For-itself, as his antithetical counters. The former he decides to call Being, the latter Nothing, which is rather odd. For nothing can be said about the In-itself except that it is—it is ineffable, devoid of quality and action—whereas a great deal is being said about the For-itself—it is free action and by its “noughting” (*néantisant*) becomes responsible for the whole world. To affirm, as Sartre does, that because the self knows itself, it (as knowing) is not what it is (as known) and that it, therefore, is Nothing seems sheer sophistry. The plain conclusion to be drawn from the 722 pages of *L'être et le néant* is that only Nothing is—a modern counterpart to Gorgias's affirmation: nothing Is.

But let us turn from the imitator to the more serious original. This is the question which Heidegger leaves unanswered: how can the “anguished vision” of a projected world such as he develops claim universal validity? Every discourse carried on with a view to expressing truth accessible to others and submitted to their free judgment presupposes an idea of reason. This is true also of Heidegger's exposition. Yet reason is excluded from his scheme of things. The difficulty is concealed by a dubious stratagem. In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger does not speak of the self or ego, although the ethos of a philosophy which places the whole burden of life on the solitary individual would seem to require him to do so. Instead he sees existence embodied in *Dasein* (“being-there”)—a mode of being in which all existing individuals are supposed to share in some unexplained way.

It might be urged against this argument that it is based on an idealist misinterpretation of Heidegger's thought. In fact, Heidegger makes it amply clear that projection is neither representation (*Vorstellung*) nor creation. To project means for him to unveil that which meets the eye (*das Begegnende*) or that which, thanks to our projection, reveals itself. So he tries to maintain a position beyond the controversy of idealism *versus* realism. He goes even farther. Not only does man project himself as being in the world. He in turn, Heidegger teaches, is projected or thrown (*geworfen*) into the world, and it is now Being that does this, and ultimately all, projecting. Being (*Sein*), the counterpart to the Encompassing (*das Umgreifende*) in Jaspers, is strictly distinguished by Heidegger from the Being Things (*Seiendes*). The confusion combated throughout the pages of *Sein und Zeit* consists in misunderstanding *Sein* as a comprehensive *Seiendes*, and the science which the book undertakes to outline is a Fundamental Ontology (*Fundamentalontologie*), that is, a theory of Being as such. Throughout Heidegger's later writings this idea of Being increases in importance though not in clarity. Finally it gets the better of the elements

borrowed from Kierkegaard, and (human) existence and knowledge appear then as a “clearing” (*Lichtung*) produced in Being. An inspiration derived from the pre-Socratics and coalescing with Hölderlin’s pagan eschatology relegates crisis and anguish into the background. Being overshadows existence.

GABRIEL MARCEL

## Testimony and Existentialism\*

HARDLY A day goes by without my being asked what is existentialism. (Usually it is a society lady who asks for this information, but to-morrow it may be my charwoman or the ticket-collector on the Underground.) It is perhaps hardly surprising that my answers tend to be evasive: I should like to say, 'It is too difficult', or 'It would take too long to explain'; but I realise that such answers are disappointing and should not be given too often. What I propose to do now is not so much to define existentialism as to try to throw some light on what seems to me its essence by bringing out its key notions—that is, the notions which give the clue to it from my standpoint, which, I need hardly add, is very different from that of Sartre. Sartre has himself admitted that there is a Christian version of existentialism which is not to be confused with his own; though, for my part, I think it is insufficient and even incorrect to stress its Christian character, because I believe that many people are liable to adhere to it who do not regard themselves as Christians.

The point I should like to examine first is the distinction between testimony and the statement of an observation.

What is an observation? I observe a phenomenon or something that I take to be a phenomenon, which is outside myself and which I note. I cannot help noting it—I am *obliged* to note. At the same time I see, when I think about it, that my observation does not in any way modify the phenomenon I have observed, and, moreover, that the *I* who observes is highly impersonal: the observation I have made could have been made equally well by anyone in my place. This accounts for the legitimate and no doubt proper use of such phrases, current in scientific text-books, as

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\* From *The Philosophy of Existence*, by Gabriel Marcel, pp. 67-76. Philosophical Library. Reprinted by permission.

'It is stated' or 'One observes'; the *I* is merely an indifferent specification of the indefinite pronoun.

Now let us turn to testimony. It is never, it cannot be ever *one* who bears witness; it is always and inevitably *I*, and if not myself, then another, who is yet another *I*. It is always an individual human being, with his proper identity, taking the word in its two correlated senses—the one civic (Thomas, son of Albert and Euphemia, born at Reading, domiciled at Clapton, etc.) and the other deeper, the identity, in time and beyond time, of a being who is not exhausted by immediacy. This is what brings out the contrast between testimony and observation. I can observe only what takes place before me now, *hic et nunc*. I cannot, for instance, observe that I saw and heard John Smith yesterday; at the most I can only observe that I remember, or that I believe that I remember having seen and heard. (Even this needs a qualification for it is not certain that the existence [?] of such a memory is a fact that can be observed.) But I can testify that John Smith was at the corner of Regent Street yesterday at 4 p.m.; he was bare headed, his expression was haggard, etc. I have said that I *can* testify; this means that 'I am in a position to . . .', it can also mean that 'I have the right'; and the occasion might arise when I have to say further that 'I *must* bear witness' in a rather different sense from the one in which I say that 'I must take note'. Actually, when I say, 'I am obliged to note', I already leave the realm of pure observation, for I imply that I must 'admit', and this brings in a reference to other people, which, as we shall see, is of the essence of testimony but is quite outside the scope of observation. I am alone with the phenomenon I observe, alone in a specific sense because I am without my identity: I am only a recording instrument, a recorder among many thousands.

The next step is to bring out the finality which is immanent in testimony.

To be a witness is to act as a guarantor. Every testimony is based on a commitment and to be incapable of committing oneself is to be incapable of bearing witness. This is indeed the reason for the preliminary oath which is administered in a law court. By taking an oath I bind myself, I give up the possibility of withdrawing myself, as it were, from what I have said; to underline this the body itself is called into play, every effort is made to ensure that the oath is a genuine and effective act, performed by me as an individual who can be discerned and identified by other people: this stocky little man with green eyes, or that long gangling fellow with the swarthy complexion.

Before whom do I commit myself—before a law court, or before something which fulfils the function of a law court: history, or posterity or the conscience of mankind? The point here is not whether these words ring hollow but that the witness always conceives of himself as standing in

the presence of someone; I would say that he is essentially a-monadic. There can be no testimony on the plane of the monad; though there can be observation on this plane, even from the most subjective standpoint: I observe that I have a headache, that my shoe pinches, etc.

Should it then be said that testimony is essentially a social act? I doubt if this ambiguous term gets us any further. The point is that testimony is given before a transcendence, perhaps even before transcendence itself; but society may have nothing to do with it, unless the word is taken in a specialised and arbitrarily defined sense. To take an example, a man I know acted as witness for the defence in a recent and famous trial. It was all too clear that the transcendence before which he spoke could not be identified with the bunch of fanatics whom he had in front of him and who, so far from taking his testimony into account, rejected it with all the might of their passions. It cannot reasonably be said that this group was the embodiment of society; yet can it be claimed that 'society' was there as a wholly ideal entity, unrepresented in the court-room, yet existing, say France, perhaps a reconciled France by opposition to the France of the partisans and the factious? It is hard to define the sociological content of such a notion. The plain fact is that the witness of whom I speak, who happens to be one of the most honourable and courageous men I know, testified before his conscience, or before Truth. (To add an instructive sequel: his unpopular evidence cost him an official appointment and a salary on which his family could have lived. The moral is worth pondering; to my mind the incident is one of the countless signs of the poisoning of the public mind by Fascism and Hitlerism; but when I told the story to a friend who is a philosopher, he replied: 'What an idiot! Why couldn't he keep quiet!')

To sum up our main points: my testimony bears on something independent from me and objectively real; it has therefore an essentially objective end. At the same time it commits my entire being as a person who is answerable for my assertions and for myself. This tension between the inward commitment and the objective end seems to me existential in the highest degree.

A further point is that testimony forms part of a law-suit; it furthers an investigation. It can thus be said to be of its essence to promote a reality of which the objective data form only one element. For there is the further question of values: there can be no law suit in which values are not at stake; uniformity in insignificance is incompatible with either testimony or judgment.

In the last analysis testimony bears on an event or that part of an event which is unique and irrevocable. If the event can be reconstructed, testimony is superfluous; in that case it becomes the duty of the judge to

discount what I, as a witness, have to say. In this way we come back to what we have already foreshadowed, that there is a kind of injunction: 'Thou shalt bear witness.' On what is it based? In the case of a particular fact the answer is simple. I was present at the time and place of an accident; I can witness that the victim crossed at an island and that the car did not slow down; my testimony will throw light on the event and help to assess the responsibility involved. I am obliged to bear witness because I hold, as it were, a particle of light, and to keep it to myself would be equivalent to extinguishing it. Can I refuse to attend the trial because of the trouble and the waste of time or because the victim was a stranger to me?—I would be guilty of a betrayal, but against whom? Against society? but we have seen how useless to us is this term; against the victim? but betrayal presupposes a commitment and I have no commitment to this stranger whom I have seen by chance. Clearly we must go deeper into the question to uncover the roots of this seeming injunction.

We have said testimony is always given before a transcendence, though this transcendence can be designated by different terms. Most of these terms seem to me to be rhetorical ways of evoking something to which they can no doubt be applied but which does not require them inevitably. What concerns us is the relation in which the witness stands to the world, what is the manner of belonging to it which is implied by his function.

Note that it is a role which I am largely free to reject. I can, for instance, say to the investigating magistrate that I have seen nothing, heard nothing and can tell him nothing. This is an interesting attitude. I might attempt to justify it on the grounds of scrupulous honesty: I cannot remember exactly what I have seen, it is so easy to distort the truth unwittingly, I do not know what to think and in this doubt I prefer to abstain. Besides, I prefer to keep my independence: whatever I said would be sure to be used either by the prosecution or the defence. I would be forced to take sides, a proceeding which is abhorrent to me. I wish to keep clear of the whole affair. It is true that I would like to know what will happen, but if I come to the trial it will be as a simple onlooker.

This brings us to the distinction between the onlooker and the witness, and a little reflection will show that it is a distinction between two opposite metaphysical attitudes. There are modern philosophers who try to impale us on the horns of a false dilemma by saying to us: 'either you are only an onlooker, in that case you are not involved in reality; or you are an active and free being. You have nothing but the choice between these two ways, indeed you *are* nothing but this choice, or rather this way which chooses itself.' But it must be asked: does not this dilemma leave out the essential factor? By adopting this standpoint, do we not forfeit all chance of under-

standing the essential point of our lives—the fact that we are witnesses and that this is the expression of our mode of belonging to the world?

I freely admit the danger that this suggestion, so far from throwing light on our problems, may thicken the shadows. Witnesses to what and before whom? We have said 'before a transcendence', but so far from being able to discern its visage, we could not even say if it was anyone at all.

Above all, witnesses to what? To the inextricable mixture of best and worst which we find in our experience? Are we to testify to all—to the absurdity and the horror as well as to the nobility and the greatness? And how are we to bear witness? Are we to relate, to consign, to keep a diary in anticipation of an immense law suit?

Clearly, when we put it in this way, the question loses all meaning and we must look further for the answer to the increasingly vast problem with which we are faced. Perhaps the mistake was to conceive of testimony in a way which, by objectivising it, impoverishes and distorts it, as though it were always something of which one could make a report.

Let us look at it in this way: it has happened to all of us to say of some consecrated and devoted life that such an existence is a testimony. Now, clearly, the value of such testimony is bound up with some form of fidelity which has become embodied in such a life: it may be the fidelity of a child to its parents, of a servant to his master, or it may be fidelity to a cause served until the end. The notion of fidelity can be degraded into passivity, into the expression of a kind of brutish habit; clearly this has no value. The value lies in the faithful following, through darkness, of a light by which we have been guided and which is no longer visible to us directly; indeed, it can be said that it is because there is a darkness, an eclipse, that there can be testimony—attestation.

Let us go back for a moment to the elementary form of testimony which we examined at the beginning; this, too, presupposes an eclipse since it is based on memory: I bear witness that John Smith was at the corner of Regent Street yesterday at 4 p.m.; my testimony does not begin until *after* the irrevocable disappearance of the image, of the event, or the ephemeral combination of atoms, which was John Smith's passage through a particular point of space and moment of time. I can bear witness only as 'one who remembers'—I will not say as one who has memory because by treating memory as a possession I would be in danger of confusing the issues.

We are now in a position to see that testimony is based on fidelity to a light or, to use another language, to a grace received. In using this term I wish to exclude its religious connotation and to treat it simply as signifying *gift*; the point is that testimony refers to something which has been



received. If I have myself taken part in an event, I can only certify, I cannot bear witness.

This finally brings us to the notion of receptivity, and of a receptivity which I would describe as creative; for we must discard the Kantian notion of the relationship between receptivity and spontaneity. As I have written elsewhere,

Receptivity covers a wide scale of gradations; at one end of it is 'suffering', in the sense in which wax 'suffers' the imprint of a seal; at the other end is giving—and even self-giving—as when we speak of a hospitable host 'receiving' his friends. This kind of 'reception' is entirely different from that of a vessel which is filled with an alien substance; it is a participation in a reality, in a plenitude, and a communication of oneself.<sup>1</sup>

To 'receive' in this sense is an act, and even an art, like that of the host who brings out the best in his guest and creates a genuine communication and exchange.

This is what must be kept in mind in analysing the term 'gift'. To give is to give to someone. Only a being can give to another being, and it is a question whether this does not inevitably imply some form of self-gift. Even if I give a thing, if I really give it, it must be something of myself (clearly it must at any rate be mine, since I cannot give something that does not belong to me). It is this possibility of self-gift that we must examine, for we have seen that testimony implies receptivity, but a receptivity which is in no way comparable with that of a vessel which is being filled. This is a question to which modern philosophers, particularly the empiricists, have not given sufficient attention; while the idealists, obsessed with the notion of spirit as activity and constructive power, have tended to regard receptivity as a property of material things. It may be asked if the Aristotelian tradition should not be followed up on this subject.

It is not without interest at this point to refer to Sartre's astonishing interpretation of giving in *L'Être et le Néant* (p. 684):

Gift is a primitive form of destruction. . . . Generosity is, above all, a destructive function. The frenzy of giving which comes over certain people at certain times is, above all, a frenzy of destruction; but this frenzy of destruction, which assumes the guise of generosity is, in reality, nothing other than a frenzy of possession. All that which I destroy, all that which I give, I enjoy the more through the gift I make of it. . . . To give is a form of destructive enjoyment, of destructive appropriation. But the gift also casts a spell over the one who receives; it forces him to re-create and continually to maintain in being that self which I no longer want, which I have enjoyed to the point of annihilation, and of which nothing

<sup>1</sup> *De Rufus à l'Invocation*, p. 123.

remains but an image. To give is to enslave. It is to appropriate by destroying and to use the destruction to enslave another.

The writer adds that 'if existential psychoanalysis finds proof of generosity in a subject, it must look further for its original purpose and discover why the subject has chosen to appropriate himself through destruction rather than through creation'.

I doubt if there exists a passage in Sartre's work which is more revealing of his inability to grasp the genuine reality of what is meant by *we* or of what governs this reality, that is precisely our capacity to open ourselves to others. This fantastic interpretation may, however, throw an indirect light on our problem. It is true that there exists a pathology of giving and that there are cases of moral suicide where one person abdicates and annuls himself completely for the benefit of another; but it cannot be more clear that this has nothing to do with self-gift in the sense of which we are speaking, and which is indeed the exact opposite of servitude. To give oneself is to devote or consecrate oneself to another, and no doubt simply to consecrate oneself. What are the conditions which can make such a consecration possible? To my mind they are those which also govern testimony; and it is perhaps this winding path which can bring us to the understanding of creative receptivity.

A notion which may help us at this point is that of transmutation. To give a thing is not merely to transfer it from one place to another but to embody in it something of oneself; what is this something? Clearly the mere fact of going into a shop to buy a present does not in itself confer any intimate significance on the gift I wish to make. Apart from the money I take out to complete the transaction, what counts is my intention, my wish to give pleasure, and perhaps also the sacrifice I make of this sum by spending it on another rather than on myself. But if my intention becomes personal and finds a means of revealing itself in the object I purchase, then it becomes possible to speak of a transmutation. By virtue of my giving it, the object, which had been until then merely a neutral thing, costing so much at this or that shop, acquires a new quality, a being-for-another, not for everybody in general but for this particular person. Clearly, this being-for-another is not an objective quality of the thing; the value of my present may lie in some memory, in some event which belongs to the life of my friend, who thus receives from me a genuine communication of myself, an expression of the manner in which he is present to me. Such a communication is existential in the sense that it is quite different from the mere transmission of a thing which is meant to reach its destination unaltered. The gift, for the one who receives it, if it is really a gift, is not just one more thing added to his possessions; it exists in

another dimension, which is that of testimony, since it is a gage of friendship or of love. But the condition of its existing in this dimension is that it should be recognised as existing in this way; in this sense it is like an appeal which demands a predetermined mode of response. Think of a small child who brings you three bedraggled dandelions it has picked by the wayside; it expects you to admire them, it awaits from you a recognition of the value of its gift; and if you lose it, or put it down carelessly, or do not stop talking to express your delight, you are guilty of a sin against love. This example seems to me instructive because of the naïve and touching spontaneity of the child, and because we are free to think that things in themselves offer themselves to us in the same eager and ingenuous way.

But a further point is that the transmutation of a thing in becoming a gift has its continuation in an accretion of being in the one who receives. Can this enrichment of the soul be compared to an accretion of physical wealth? Such a comparison is misleading because this particular enrichment can be conceived only in terms of participation; it requires an action on my part, I am at liberty to reject it by refusing my recognition and my response. And it must be admitted that this is the most difficult part of my case. My claim that I am free to respond or to refuse my response can always be questioned; for are there not indigent and ungrateful natures who are deprived of the gift of responding? Just as there are others who are incapable of trust, that is to say of faith, and who are therefore unable to recognise that life is a gift and that all things are given to them? This is an immense problem. I believe it should be possible to show that the question arises in this form only in a world where the individual is totally insulated, where he is given over to his indigence and mercilessly weaned from the tradition which should nourish him and should awake in him his capacity for recognition and for gratitude; for in such a world, short of an especial grace, he is indeed doomed to see himself, like the man of Heidegger and of Sartre, as the victim of some cosmic catastrophe, flung into an alien universe to which he is bound by nothing. But should it not be the task of a sane philosophy at this time to link up with this tradition by an effort of thought which should bring out its metaphysical evidence? Nothing short of an effort of this kind seems to me to have any chance of success against a doctrine of death on which, whatever one may say, no wisdom can be built.

## Man\*

THE GIGANTIC topic of "man" can barely be touched upon in an hour's time. Since we are men, it is assuredly of the utmost importance for us to know of man. We are even told: To know what man is, is the only knowledge that is possible for us, for we are men ourselves—and that alone is essential—, for man is the measure of all things. One can speak of all other things only in relation to man, that is, one can speak only of what he encounters in the world, of what serves him, and of what is beyond his powers. What he sees, hears, touches, has for him the characteristic of real actuality. Whatever else he has in his thoughts, is his imagining, produced by him. If we confine ourselves to man, we shall have what is accessible to us what concerns us; we shall have everything that is.

For a moment this sounds convincing and yet it is replete with fallacy. It is indeed true that everything that manifests itself to us in such a way that we can apprehend it. Hence the great postulate that all being become actual for man, that he experience it, that he receive it in his here and now. This postulate is a fundamental characteristic of humanity; witness the extraordinary fact that infinitesimal man, a nothing in a tiny corner of the infinite universe, in his narrow space, is concerned with what stands beyond and before the existence of the world. Valid for him is only what becomes present for him. After writing his famous words about the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me, Kant continues: "These two things I may not do. . . seek beyond my sphere and merely presume; I see them before me and link them immediately with the consciousness of my existence. The first begins at the place that I occupy in the outward sensory world. . . The second begins with my

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\* From *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, by Karl Jaspers, pp. 47-74. Philosophical Library. Reprinted by permission.

invisible self . . . and represents me in a world. . . with which I know myself to stand not in a mere accidental relation as with that other world, but in a universal and necessary context. . .”

But though what is must become actual for man, since for him all being lies in presence, it is not brought forth by man; man produces neither sensible realities, nor the content of his ideas, his thoughts and symbols. What really is, is even without man, even though it appears to us in forms and modes that originate in man. Indeed, we have better knowledge of all those things that we ourselves are not—what man is, is perhaps less clear to him than anything else he encounters. He becomes for himself the greatest of all mysteries when he senses that despite his finite nature, his possibilities seem to extend into the infinite.

Man defined himself first by means of great images, as though he already understood himself: First he conceived of himself in the hierarchy of the creatures. As a sensual being, he is the highest of the beasts, as a spiritual being, the lowest of the angels; yet he is neither beast nor angel, but related to both by a part of his nature, superior to each by virtue of that which is lacking in one or the other, but which he possesses from his own origin, as the direct creation of God.

Or man is conceived as the microcosm which contains everything that the world, the macrocosm, enfolds. Man corresponds to no other being, only to the world as a whole. This idea was developed in detail and graphically illustrated by specific correspondences between man's organs and cosmic phenomena. Aristotle expressed it sublimely and profoundly when he said: The soul is in a certain sense everything.

Secondly, man's being was seen in his situation rather than in the image of his form. The fundamental human situation in which he finds himself, is at the same time the fundamental characteristic of his being:

Bede tells of the Anglo-Saxon council summoned to decide on the question of the acceptance of the Christian faith in 627. One of the dukes compared the life of man on earth with the flight of a sparrow through a banquet hall in winter,\* “a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow we are utterly ignorant.” This Germanic heathen feels himself dependent on something alien, he feels that he is here in the

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\* Bede the Venerable, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* (London 1916), p. 91.

world by accident, but in this life he feels happy and sheltered; his care is for the brevity of life and for what comes after.

Like him, St. Augustine (*de beata vita*) sees the mystery of man's entrance into his life, but with an opposite value judgment: "For since God or nature or necessity or our will, or all together—the matter is very obscure—seemingly unthinking and at random has cast us into this world as into a stormy sea. . ."

Thirdly, man's being has been seen in his misery and greatness at once, in his weakness and potentiality, in the mystery of how his opportunities and tasks develop precisely out of his fragility. This image of man runs in modulations through all Western history:

The Greeks knew that no man is to be called happy before his death. He is exposed to an uncertain fate; men pass away, like the leaves in the forest. To forget the measure of man is hybris, the ensuing fall is all the more precipitate. But the Greeks also knew that: There are many mighty things, but nothing mightier than man.

The Old Testament knows the same polarity. It expresses the nothingness of man:

As for man, his days are as grass,  
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.  
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone,  
And the place thereof shall know it no more.  
(Psalm 103:15,16)

But man's greatness is also seen:

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,  
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.  
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;  
Thou hast put all things under his feet.  
(Psalm 8:5,6)

But exalted above this conception of man's fragility and greatness, which is common to many peoples, is the Old Testament conception of man as the likeness of the godhead: God created man in His image. Man fell from God and now embodies both the likeness to God, and sin.

The Christians continued on this road. So definite was their knowledge of man's limitation that they found it even in the man-god: In the deepest torment Jesus experienced what he expressed on the Cross in the words of the Psalm: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Man cannot stand on himself.

This candid view of man's limitation permits the Christians in their legends to look upon even the holiest of men as capable of despair and

guilt. Peter, questioned by the maid and in fear of the executioners, thrice denied Jesus. Rembrandt painted this man (the painting, now in Leningrad, was for a time on exhibit in Holland): Peter's face at the moment of his denial, unforgettably revealing a basic trait of our human nature; the menacing executioners; the furious, triumphant maid; the mild gaze of Jesus in the background.

St. Paul and St. Augustine understood the impossibility of the good man being really good. Why can he not be really good? When he does a good deed, he must know that he is doing a good deed; but this very knowledge is self-satisfaction and therefore pride. Without self-reflection there can be no human goodness, with self-reflection the goodness cannot be blameless and pure.

Pico della Mirandola, in the joy of the still Christian Renaissance, portrayed man in accord with the idea of him outlined by God when He put him into the world at the end of the creation: God made man in his image, combining in him all things, and said to him: We have given thee no definite dwelling-place, no particular heritage. We have subordinated all other beings in creation to definite laws. Thou alone art in nothing restricted and canst take upon thyself and choose to be what thou wilt. Thou thyself, according to thy will and thy glory, shalt be thine own masterworker and sculptor and form thyself of the stuff that is to thy liking. Thus thou art free to descend to the lowest level of the animal world. But thou canst also raise thyself to the highest spheres of godhead. —The animals possess from birth everything they will ever possess. In man alone God scattered the seeds of every action and the germs of every kind of life.

Pascal, tormented by the Christian sense of sin, saw both the greatness and the misery of man. Man is everything and he is nothing. With no ground beneath his feet, he stands between two infinities. Composed of irreconcilable opposites, he lives in insatiable unrest, he is neither a reconciled middle term, nor a complacent mediocrity. "What a chimera is man! What a monster, what a chaos, what a thing of contradiction. . . judger of all things, foolish earthworm. . . glory and excrement of the universe. . . Man infinitely transcends man. . . Unhappy as we are we have an idea of happiness, and we cannot attain it. We carry within us an image of the truth and possess only error. We are incapable of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge."

But we have given enough historical examples of the conception of man's nature. Let us now attempt to achieve fundamental clarity concerning the knowledge of man. There are two ways of looking at man; either as an object of inquiry, or as freedom.

Man is an object of inquiry for anatomy, physiology, psychology and

sociology. Anthropology—ethnology and morphology—studies his physical existence as a whole. We have acquired a considerable body of knowledge, the basic feature of which is that all its insights, even the relative generalizations, are particular; the insights remain scattered, do not combine into a complete system. Consequently this knowledge of man always goes astray when it leads to total judgments on man, to supposed understanding of the whole.

Of essential philosophical importance are the fundamental questions. The question of the difference between man and beast (and with it the question of man's origin) is perhaps the most interesting question of all. Here we have possibilities of empirical investigation, while an inquiry into the difference between man and angel can only be carried on in imaginative constructions which—though instructive—measure man by hypothetical potentialities.

Two contradictory basic experiences are the points of departure of scientific investigation. We see ourselves as a link in the chain of living things, one among many. The question of the difference between man and animal has become misleading. I can only propound a definite and answerable question concerning the difference, for example, between man and ape, between the ape and other animals, etc., but I cannot inquire into the difference between man and animal.

The other experience is: We see man's body in its incomparable expression. It belongs to man himself, has its nobility and beauty, in comparison to which every other living thing seems particular, as though moving down a blind alley. Even in man's body we seek after these incomparable basic traits, and in our comparison place him in opposition to all other living things.

Facts have been disclosed along both lines of approach, but really decisive ones only in the first. Yet answers leading to important fundamental results can be obtained only by following the second approach. If something truly unique were found in the physical structure of man, the first line of investigation would acquire a more specific meaning. Up to now, this has not been done, despite the many answers offered, from the discovery that only man can laugh, to the assertion that the structure of man's body is physiologically and morphologically open, and that in distinction to all other living things that seem to adhere to rigid patterns, his body somehow embraces all the potentialities of the living.—The question of present fact must be distinguished from the question of origin. The latter is involved when man is conceived as an abortive embryonic development or as a phenomenon of domestication through civilization, analogous to the domestic animals—both absurd conceptions. Portmann's epoch-making research into the phenomena of man's early



childhood and adolescence has revealed, no doubt for the first time, by biological methods, that even as regards his physical structure man achieves his specifically human characteristics with the help of elements pertaining to historical tradition; in other words, man, including his biological traits, cannot be explained merely by the laws of heredity, but must be placed within a historical framework.

But we are far removed from any certain biological understanding of the uniqueness of man's physical life, although we think we can see it without scientific knowledge.

Closely connected with the question of the difference between man and animal, is the question of man's origin, of how he became man. In this connection, it may be presumed, science will undergo the same experience as in the question of the origin of life in general. The progress of knowledge increases our nonknowledge of the fundamental questions and thus suggests the existence of limits and the need to draw upon sources other than cognition.

Thirty years ago a geologist asked me to deliver a lecture on the origin of life. I replied: The greatness of biology is revealed by the fact that in contrast to earlier unclear conceptions of transitions, it is coming to an increasingly definite realization that this origin is unfathomable. The geologist: But either life must have originated on earth, that is, from the inorganic, or its germs must have flown in from the cosmos. Myself: This looks like a perfect disjunctive proposition, but obviously both alternatives are impossible. The geologist: Then you take refuge in miracles? Myself: No, but in knowledge I seek to gain only the essential nonknowledge. The geologist: That I do not understand. You are pursuing something negative. The world is after all understandable, otherwise our whole science would be meaningless. Myself: But perhaps what gives it meaning is precisely and solely that through understanding it comes up against that which is authentically ununderstandable. And perhaps it is meaningful to express the ununderstandable through the play of thought at the limit of cognition. To conceive of life germs in the cosmos, flying everywhere, creating life, seems just such a play of thought, because life of this kind has always been. But that is a trivial and meaningless play of thought. It seems to me that a more expressive play is to be found in Preyer's idea that the world is one single gigantic body of life, and that everything that is not alive is its excrement and corpse. Then it is not the origin of life, but the origin of the non-living that would have to be explained.

A similar problem is that of the origin of man. Important material has been contributed, consisting for the most part of hypotheses, but also of some isolated facts. On the whole, the mystery has grown deeper, our vision

of prehistory has been somewhat illumined, but the fundament of man's origin has become more and more unfathomable. The best of these impossible conceptions seems to me that of Dacqué: man has always existed, he lived in various animal forms, yet was entirely different from the morphologically related animal forms, from the fish, the reptile, etc. Man, one might continue, has always been the authentic form of life, and all other life is a degeneration from man; in the last analysis, it was not man that developed from ape, but ape from man. And now perhaps we are facing a new and long-term process of regression: perhaps there will come into being a new animal species which will become petrified in a technological mode of life, and beside it a new humanity will develop, from whose vantage point this mass will seem like another species, a something that is merely living but is no longer human. These are far-fetched speculations, and yet they do cast a certain light upon our non-knowledge.

The matter was admirably summed up by a joke that appeared in *Simplicissimus* during the first World War. Two Bavarian peasants are talking things over. People are pretty dumb, says one, maybe Darwin was right after all. Maybe we are descended from the apes.—Yes, says the other, but just the same I'd like to see the ape that first noticed that he wasn't an ape any more.

Man cannot be derived from something else, but is immediately at the base of all things. To be aware of this signifies man's freedom, which is lost in every other total determination of his being, and comes entirely into its own only in this one total determination. All empirical causalities and biological processes of development would seem to apply to man's material substratum, not to himself. No one can tell how far science will advance in the knowledge of the development of this human substratum. And scarcely any field of research is more exciting and captivating.

Every insight into man, if it is absolutized into a supposed knowledge of man as a whole, destroys his freedom. And this is the case with such theories of man, meaningful for limited perspectives, as have been propounded by psychoanalysis, Marxism, racial theory. They veil man himself as soon as they attempt to investigate anything more than aspects of his nature.

Science, it is true, shows us remarkable and highly surprising things about man, but as it attains greater clarity, the more evident it becomes that man as a whole can never become the object of scientific investigation. Man is always more than he knows about himself. This is true both of man in general and of the individual man. We can never draw up a balance sheet and know the answer, either concerning man in general, or concerning any individual man.

To absolutize knowledge that is always particular into a whole knowledge of man leads to the utter neglect of the human image of man. And a neglect of the image of man leads to a neglect of man himself. For the image of man that we hold to be true is itself a factor in our life. It influences our behavior toward ourselves and others, our vital attitude, and our choice of tasks.

Each of us for himself is certain of what man is, in a way that precedes scientific research and also comes after it. This is the prerogative of our freedom, which knows itself bound up with cogent knowledge, but is not included in it as an object of cognition. For in so far as we make ourselves the object of scientific inquiry, we see no freedom, but factuality, finiteness, form, relation, causal necessity. But it is by our freedom that we have awareness of our humanity.

Let me sum up once again, in order to gain a more secure foundation for our consciousness of freedom.

Man cannot be understood on the basis of evolution from the animals.

In opposition to this we have the thesis: Without such evolution it is impossible to explain his origin. Since this is the only intelligible explanation and since everything in the world takes place in accordance with intelligible laws, man must have come into being through such an evolution.

The answer: True, for our cognition, everything is intelligible, for only where there is intelligibility is there cognition; beyond cognition, nothing exists for cognition. But the whole of being does not by any means resolve into intelligibility, if by cognition we mean scientifically cogent knowledge capable of being communicated unchanged. This knowledge itself is always particular, it refers always to definite, finite objects—whenever it approaches the whole as such, it slides into fundamental fallacies.

The world as a whole cannot be apprehended on the basis of one or several or many intelligible principles. Cognition breaks it into fragments—after the first erroneous and vain thrust toward the whole. Cognition is in the world and does not comprehend the world. Universal knowledge—as in mathematics and in the natural sciences—does indeed encompass something universal, but never reality as a whole.

But it would be a new fallacy to effect a leap within knowledge to other knowledge. To imagine, for instance, that at the limit of the knowable there is a creator of the world, and to suppose that this creator intervenes in the course of the world. As far as knowledge is concerned, these are merely metaphoric tautologies for nonknowledge.

The world is disclosed as having no foundation in itself. But in himself man finds what he finds nowhere else in the world: something unknowable, undemonstrable, something that is never object, that evades all scientific

inquiry: he finds freedom and what goes with it. In this sphere I have experience not through knowledge of something, but through action. Here the road leads through the world and ourselves to transcendence.

To those who deny it freedom cannot be proved like things that occur in the world. But since the primal source of our action and our consciousness of being lies in freedom, what man is, is not merely the object of knowledge, but also of *faith*. Man's certainty as to his humanity is one of the basic elements of philosophical faith.

But man's freedom is inseparable from his *consciousness of his finite nature*.

Let us briefly outline the main points: Man's finiteness is first of all the finiteness of all living things. He is dependent upon his environment, upon nourishment and sensory contents; he is inexorably exposed to the mute and blind natural process; he must die.

Man's finiteness is secondly his dependence on other men, and on the historical world produced by the human collectivity. He can rely on nothing in this world. The fruits of fortune come and go. The human order is ruled not only by justice, but also by the power of the moment, that declares its arbitrary will to be the organ of justice, and hence is always based partly upon untruth. State and national community can destroy men who work for them all their lives. Reliance can be placed only on the loyalty of man in existential communication, but this cannot be calculated. For what one relies on here is not an objective, demonstrable reality. And the man closest to one can at any time fall sick, go mad, die.

Man's finiteness lies thirdly in the nature of his cognition, in his dependence on the experience that is given him, especially on direct perception. My intellect can apprehend nothing but the matter of direct perception that fills in my concept.

Man becomes conscious of his finiteness by comparison with something that is not finite, with the absolute and the infinite:

The *absolute* becomes actual for him in his decision, the fulfillment of which directs him to an origin other than that which science makes intelligible to him in his finite existence.

The *infinite* is touched, though not apprehended, first in the idea of infinity, then in the conception of a divine knowledge essentially different from man's finite knowledge, finally in thoughts of immortality. The infinite which though unfathomable does enter into man's consciousness, causes man to transcend his finiteness by becoming aware of it.

Through the presence of the absolute and the infinite, man's finiteness does not remain merely the unconscious datum of his empirical existence; but through the light of transcendence it becomes the basic trait in his consciousness of his created nature. Thus though man cannot annul his finiteness, he does break through it.

But if in the absoluteness of his decision in the face of everything finite in the world, he becomes through his independence, certain of his infinity as his authentic selfhood, this infinity also reveals a new mode of his finiteness. This finiteness as existence means that even as himself man cannot ascribe himself to himself. It is not through himself that he is originally himself. And just as he does not owe his empirical existence in the world to his own will, his self is a free gift to him by transcendence. He must be given to himself over and over again, if he is not to lose himself. If man maintains his inner integrity in the face of fate and even of death, he cannot do so by himself alone. What helps him here is of a different kind than any help in the world. Transcendent help reveals itself to him solely in the fact that he can be himself. That he can stand by himself, he owes to an intangible hand, extended to him from transcendence, a hand whose presence he can feel only in his freedom.

Man as object of investigation and man as freedom are known to us from radically different sources. The former is a content of knowledge, the latter a fundamental trait of our faith. But if freedom for its part becomes a content of knowledge and an object of investigation, a special form of superstition arises:

*Faith* stands on the road to freedom that is not an absolute and not an empty freedom, but that is experienced as the possibility of being given or not given to oneself. It is only through freedom that I become certain of transcendence. By freedom, to be sure, I attain to a point of independence from the world, but precisely through the consciousness of my radical attachment to transcendence. For it is not through myself that I am.

*Superstition* on the other hand arises by way of a something that is the express content of faith, and thus also through a supposed knowledge of freedom. A modern form of superstition for example is psychoanalysis taken as a philosophy, and the pseudomedicine that makes man's freedom a supposed object of scientific research.

As I conceive of the nature of my humanity, so I conceive of transcendence—i.e. I conceive of it either as something that limits me or as something that enables me to soar, it is superstition steeped in the object (hence associated with scientific aberration), or faith, inner experience of the Comprehensive (hence associated with the consummation of nonknowledge).

Man, in common with everything he sees around him, in common with the beasts, is branded as a finite creature. But his human finiteness *cannot become self-contained*, in the same sense as the animal.

Every animal is perfect in its own way, in its limitation it fulfills itself within a continually repeated life cycle. It is exposed only to the natural process in which all things merge and are brought forth. Only man cannot

fulfill himself in his finiteness. It is only man whose finiteness involves him in history, in which he strives to realize his potentialities. His openness is a sign of his freedom.

Because man cannot fulfill himself in his finite existence, because he must forever search and strive (rather than live unconsciously in the unchanging rut of recurrent cycles), he, alone of all living creatures, knows that he is finite. Because of his incapacity for perfection, his finiteness becomes more to him than is revealed in the mere knowledge of the end. Man feels lost in it, and as a result becomes aware of his task and potentialities. He finds himself in the most desperate situation, but in such a way, that from it issues the strongest appeal to raise himself up through his freedom. And that is why man has again and again been represented as the most astoundingly contradictory of creatures, the most wretched and the most magnificent.

The proposition that man is finite and unfulfillable has an ambivalent character. It is an insight, it derives from demonstrable knowledge of the finite. But in its universality it points to a faith content, in which the freedom of human tasks is generated. In the fundamental experience of his nature, transcending the plane of knowledge, he is aware of both his unfulfillment and his infinite potentiality, his bondage and his freedom that breaks through this bondage.

Conscious of his freedom, man desires to become what he can and should be. He conceives an *ideal* of his nature. As on the plane of cognition, the idea of man as an object of scientific inquiry may lead to a falsely definitive image of him, so on the plane of freedom he may falsely choose a path leading to an absolute ideal. From helpless questioning and bewilderment, he thus aspires to take refuge in a universal that he can imitate in its concrete forms.

There are numerous images of man that have served as ideals with which we wished to identify ourselves. There is no doubt that such ideals have been effective, and that social types actually influence our behavior. The ideal can be magnified to a vague conception of man's "greatness," of something in man that is in a sense more than human, that is superhuman or inhuman.

For our philosophical consciousness it is crucial that we convince ourselves of the untruth and impossibility of such paths. Kant has given us the purest expression of this.\* "To attempt to realize the ideal in an example, that is, as a real phenomenon, as we might represent a perfectly wise man in a novel, is impossible, nay, absurd, and but little encouraging, because

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\* *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by F. Max Müller (New York 1927), p. 461.

the natural limits, which are constantly interfering with the perfection in the idea, make all illusion in such an experiment impossible, and thus render the good itself in the idea suspicious and unreal."

Just as we lose sight of man when he becomes an object of scientific inquiry in racial theory, psychoanalysis, or Marxism and is represented as fully understandable, so we lose sight of the human task when he becomes an ideal.

The ideal is something fundamentally different from the idea. There is no ideal of man, but there is an idea of man. Ideals of man collapse, the idea of man serves as a goal to his march forward. Ideals can in a sense be schemata of ideas, road signs. That is the truth in the great philosophical conceptions of the Noble Man in China, or of the Stoic Wise Man. They are not images of fulfillment, they only stimulate man's desire to rise above himself.

Something else again is orientation by the honored and beloved historical figure. We may ask: What would he say in this case, how would he act? And we enter into a living discussion with him, though without regarding him as the absolutely true model to be imitated unconditionally. For each man is a man, and therefore lives in finiteness and imperfection, and also in error.

All ideals of man are impossible, because man's potentialities are infinite. There can be no perfect man. This has important philosophical consequences.

1. The true value of man lies not in the species or type that he approximates, but in the historical individual, for whom no substitution or replacement is possible. The value of each individual man can be regarded as unassailable only when men cease to be regarded as expendable material, to be stamped by a universal. The social and professional types that we approximate have bearing only on our role in the world.

2. The idea that all men are equal is obviously false, in so far as psychological aptitudes and talents are concerned,—it is also untrue considered as the reality of a social order, in which at best there can be equal opportunities and equity before the law.

The essential equality of all men lies alone in those depths, where to each man the road is opened by freedom to attain to God by leading an ethical life. It is the equality of a value that no human knowledge can ascertain or objectify, of the individual as an eternal soul. It is the equality of rights, and of the eternal judgment according to which a man merits a place in heaven or hell. This equality means: a respect for every man which forbids that any man should be treated only as a means and not at the same time as an end in himself.

The danger facing man is the self-assurance which tells him that he already is what he is capable of becoming. The faith by which he finds the road of his potentialities, becomes then a possession that concludes his road, whether it take the form of moral self-complacency or of pride in his innate gifts.

From the Stoic view that man should live so as to be pleasing to himself, to the harmony with himself that Kant ascribes to the man who acts in an ethical way, there has prevailed an arbitrary self-complacency, to which St. Paul and St. Augustine, indeed Kant himself opposed the idea of man corrupted in the root.

The essential is that man as existence in his freedom should experience the fact of being given to himself by transcendence. Then human freedom is at the heart of all his potentialities and through transcendence, through the one, man is guided to his own inner unity.

This *guidance* is radically different from any guidance in the world; for it offers no objective certainty; it coincides with man's complete attainment of freedom. For it operates only by way of the freedom of subjective certainty. God's voice resides in the light that comes as his own conviction to the individual open to tradition and his environment. God's voice becomes audible in the freedom of subjective conviction, and this is the only organ by which it can impart itself to man. Where man's resolve arises out of his depths, he believes that he is obeying God, though he has no objective guaranty for his knowledge of God's will.

Guidance operates through man's judgment concerning his own acts. This judgment checks him and spurs him on, corrects and confirms. But in fact, man can never wholly and definitively base his judgment concerning himself upon himself. He desires to hear the judgment of his fellow men, in order to attain clarity through communication. But the crucial judgment is not in the last analysis that of the people he esteems, although this is the only judgment that is accessible to him in practice. The decisive judgment would be that of God.

Thus in time the truth of judgment is ultimately attained only by way of subjective conviction, whether the moral law claims universal or only historical validity.

Inward obedience to the freely accepted, universal ethical law—to the ten commandments—is bound up with the realization that transcendence is present in this very freedom.

But since specific action cannot logically be deduced from the universal law, God's guiding voice can be heard more directly in the primal source of the historically concrete law than in the universal. But for all the subjective certainty this voice gives, its meaning remains uncertain. Obedience to God's voice always involves the risk of error. For its message



is susceptible to many interpretations, the freedom that would consist in the clear and unmistakable knowledge of the necessary, is never complete. The risk implied in the question of whether in this matter I am really myself, whether I have truly heard the guiding voice from the primal spring of being, never ceases.

In time, this consciousness of risk remains the condition for increasing freedom. It excludes complete reliance on subjective certainty, forbids the generalization of the subjective commandment into a universal law, and bars fanaticism. Even in the certainty of the resolve, there must, in so far as it is translated into practical action, remain a certain margin of indetermination. There can be no subjective security. The pride of the absolute truth destroys truth in the world. The humility of the permanent question is inherent in subjective certainty. For it is always possible that things will subsequently look quite different. Even the clear, but never adequately clear conscience, can embark on error.

Only in retrospect are we justified in admiring the unfathomable wisdom of God's guidance. But even then it is never certain, God's unfathomable guidance can never become a possession.

From the psychological point of view, God's voice has no other expression in time than man's judgment of himself. This judgment may come upon man with a sudden certainty, after man has honestly and carefully striven for it, weighing all the contradictory possibilities; and then he discovers in it God's judgment, though it is never definitive and always equivocal. But only in exalted moments is it audible. It is by such moments and for such moments that we live.

The road of the thinking man is a philosophical life. Philosophizing is a specifically human pursuit. Man is the only being in the world to whom being is manifested through his empirical existence. He cannot fulfill himself in empirical existence as such, he cannot content himself with the enjoyment of empirical existence. He breaks through all the empirical realities that find their seeming fulfillment in the world. As a man he only attains to real knowledge of himself when, open to being as a whole, he relates his life in the world to transcendence. In the very effort to master empirical existence, he strives toward being. For he cannot adequately account for his sojourn in the world by the laws immanent to the world. Accordingly, he goes beyond his empirical existence, beyond the world, to the ground of existence and the world, where he attains awareness of his primal source. Here, though in a sense he is in communion with creation, he does not find a secure refuge, nor is he at his goal. He must seek eternity in his life, which mediates between the primal source and the goal.

In unfaith the human condition becomes a biological fact among

other biological facts; man surrenders to what his finite knowledge determines as necessities and inevitabilities, he gives in to a sense of futility, the energy of his mind declines. He stifles in his supposed factuality.

Philosophical faith, on the other hand, is the faith of man in his potentialities. In it breathes his freedom.



## *Freud, Philosophy, and Human Values*

SIGMUND FREUD belongs to that small number of creative thinkers whose views have brought about a revolution in man's understanding of himself and his world. Even the man-in-the street knows about Freud's claim that much human behavior is caused by deeply buried psychological forces. However, the impact of Freud's theories on scholarly areas other than medicine and psychology is less well known to the layman. Freudian theories and techniques have affected thought about art, politics, and religion; and philosophers are now profoundly aware how instances of reasoning which claim to report objective truth may actually reflect a thinker's personal emotions.

More specifically, philosophers are interested in Freud for at least the following reasons: value problems usually involve human emotions: hence, philosophers concerned about values must begin to accept the role of the emotions in human life as one important aspect of the subject-matter requiring analysis. Again, Freud's views raise some serious question about the extent of a genuine human responsibility: consequently, ethical philosophers have shown great concern for the implications of Freudian concepts for moral analysis. Finally, some philosophers believe they detect a peculiarly important relation between philosophizing and other kinds of activity which are produced by anxiety: such a relation opens a question of the legitimacy of philosophy itself. Freud's

views may prove to be one-sided, or even erroneous, but as the following selections will demonstrate, it is clear that modern philosophy cannot ignore them.

### *SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING*

- BARUCH, DOROTHY. *One Little Boy*  
 BERG, CHARLES. *Deep Analysis*  
 BLUM, GERALD S. *Psychoanalytic Theories of Personality*  
 DEUTSCH, HELENE. *Psychology of Women*  
 ERIKSON, E. H. *Childhood and Society*  
 FREUD, SIGMUND. *Civilization and its Discontents*  
 FREUD, SIGMUND. *Leonardo da Vinci*  
 FREUD, SIGMUND. *Moses and Monotheism*  
 FREUD, SIGMUND. *Totem and Taboo*  
 FREUD, SIGMUND. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*  
 FROMM, ERICH. *Escape from Freedom*  
 HOOK, SIDNEY, ed. *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method and Philosophy*  
 JONES, ERNEST. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*  
 LAZEROWITZ, MORRIS. *The Structure of Metaphysics*  
 MULLAHY, PATRICK. *Oedipus: Myth and Complex*  
 WISDOM, JOHN. *Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis*

## The Future of an Illusion\*

AN ENQUIRY that proceeds uninterruptedly, like a monologue, is not altogether without its dangers. One is too easily tempted to push aside thoughts that would interrupt it, and in exchange one is left with a feeling of uncertainty which one will drown in the end by over-decisiveness. I shall therefore imagine an opponent who follows my arguments with mistrust, and I shall let him interject remarks here and there.

I hear him saying: 'You have repeatedly used the expressions "culture creates these religious ideas", "culture places them at the disposal of its members", which sounds strange to me somehow. I could not say why myself, but it does not sound so natural as to say that culture has made regulations about distributing the products of labour or about the rights over women and children.'

I think, nevertheless, that one is justified in expressing oneself thus. I have tried to show that religious ideas have sprung from the same need as all the other achievements of culture: from the necessity for defending itself against the crushing supremacy of nature. And there was a second motive: the eager desire to correct the so painfully felt imperfections of culture. Moreover, there is something particularly apposite in saying that culture gives the individual these ideas, for he finds them at hand, they are presented to him ready-made; he would not be in a position to find them by himself. It is the heritage of many generations which he enters into and which he takes over as he does the multiplication table, geometry, etc. There is certainly a distinction in this, but it lies elsewhere, and I cannot examine it at this point. The feeling of strangeness that you mention may be partly accounted for by the fact that this stock

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\* From the book of the same title, Chapters IV-VI, pp. 33-58. By permission of Liveright, Publishers, New York.

of religious ideas is generally offered as a divine revelation. But that is in itself a part of the religious system, and entirely leaves out of account the known historical development of these ideas and their variations in different ages and cultures.

‘Another point which seems to me more important. You would derive the humanization of nature from the desire to put an end to human perplexity and helplessness in the face of nature’s dreaded forces, and from the necessity for establishing relations with, and finally influencing, these forces. But this explanation seems to be superfluous. For primitive man has no choice, he has no other way of thinking. It is natural to him, as if innate, to project his existence outwards into the world, and to regard all events that come under his observations as the manifestations of beings who fundamentally resemble himself. It is his only method of comprehension. And it is by no means self-evident, on the contrary it is a remarkable coincidence, that he should succeed in satisfying one of his great wants by thus indulging his natural disposition.’

I do not find that so striking. For do you suppose that men’s thought-processes have no practical motives, that they are simply the expression of a disinterested curiosity? That is surely very improbable. I believe, rather, that when he personifies the forces of nature man is once again following an infantile prototype. He has learnt from the persons of his earliest environment that the way to influence them is to establish a relationship with them, and so, later on, with the same end in view, he deals with everything that happens to him as he dealt with those persons. Thus I do not contradict your descriptive observation; it is, in point of fact, natural to man to personify everything that he wishes to comprehend, in order that later he may control it—the psychical subjugation as preparation for the physical—but I provide in addition a motive and genesis for this peculiarity of human thought.

‘And now yet a third point. You have dealt with the origin of religion once before, in your book *Totem und Tabu*. But it appears in a different light. Everything is the son-father relationship; God is the exalted father, and the longing for the father is the root of the need for religion. Since then, it seems, you have discovered the factor of human weakness and helplessness, to which indeed the chief part in the formation of religion is commonly assigned, and you now transfer to helplessness everything that was formerly father complex. May I ask you to enlighten me on this transformation?’

With pleasure. I was only waiting for this invitation. But is it really a transformation? In *Totem und Tabu* it was not my purpose to explain the origin of religions, but only of totemism. Can you from any standpoint known to you explain the fact that the first form in which the protecting

deity revealed itself to men was that of an animal, that a prohibition existed against killing or eating this animal, and that yet it was the solemn custom to kill it and eat it communally once a year? It is just this that takes place in totemism. And it is hardly to the purpose to argue whether totemism should be called a religion. It has intimate connections with the later god-religions; the totem animals become the sacred animals of the gods; and the earliest, and the most profound, moral restrictions—the murder prohibition and the incest prohibition—originate in totemism. Whether or not you accept the conclusions of *Totem und Tabu*, I hope you will admit that in that book a number of very remarkable isolated facts are brought together into a consistent whole.

Why in the long run the animal god did not suffice and why it was replaced by the human—that was hardly discussed in *Totem und Tabu*, and other problems of the formation of religion find no mention there at all. But do you regard such a limitation as identical with a denial? My work is a good example of the strict isolation of the share that psycho-analytic observation can contribute to the problem of religion. If I am now trying to add to it the other, less deeply hidden, part, you should not accuse me of inconsistency, just as before I was accused of being one-sided. It is of course my business to point out the connecting links between what I said before and what I now put forward, between the deeper and the manifest motivation, between the father complex and man's helplessness and need for protection.

The connections are not difficult to find. They consist in the relation of the child's helplessness to the adult's continuation of it, so that, as was to be expected, the psycho-analytic motivation of the forming of religion turns out to be the infantile contribution to its manifest motivation. Let us imagine to ourselves the mental life of the small child. You remember the object-choice after the anaclitic type, which psycho-analysis talks about? The libido follows the paths of narcissistic needs, and attaches itself to the objects that ensure their satisfaction. So the mother, who satisfies hunger, becomes the first love-object, and certainly also the first protection against all the undefined and threatening dangers of the outer world; becomes, if we may so express it, the first protection against anxiety.

In this function the mother is soon replaced by the stronger father, and this situation persists from now on over the whole of childhood. But the relation to the father is affected by a peculiar ambivalence. He was himself a danger, perhaps just because of that earlier relation to the mother; so he is feared no less than he is longed for and admired. The indications of this ambivalence are deeply imprinted in all religions, as is brought out in *Totem und Tabu*. Now when the child grows up and

finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, and that he can never do without protection against unknown and mighty powers, he invests these with the traits of the father-figure; he creates for himself the gods, of whom he is afraid, whom he seeks to propitiate, and to whom he nevertheless entrusts the task of protecting him. Thus the longing-for-the-father explanation is identical with the other, the need for protection against the consequences of human weakness; the child's defensive reaction to his helplessness gives the characteristic features to the adult's reaction to his own sense of helplessness, *i.e.* the formation of religion. But it is not our intention to pursue further the development of the idea of God; we are concerned here with the matured stock of religious ideas as culture transmits them to the individual.

## V

Now to take up again the threads of our enquiry: what is the psychological significance of religious ideas and how can we classify them? The question is at first not at all easy to answer. Having rejected various formulas, I shall take my stand by this one: religion consists of certain dogmas, assertions about facts and conditions of external (or internal) reality, which tell one something that one has not oneself discovered and which claim that one should give them credence. As they give information about what are to us the most interesting and important things in life, they are particularly highly valued. He who knows nothing of them is ignorant indeed, and he who has assimilated them may consider himself enriched.

There are of course many such dogmas about the most diverse things of this world. Every school hour is full of them. Let us choose geography. We hear there: Konstanz is on the Bodensee. A student song adds: If you don't believe it go and see. I happen to have been there, and can confirm the fact that this beautiful town lies on the shore of a broad stretch of water, which all those dwelling around call the Bodensee. I am now completely convinced of the accuracy of this geographical statement. And in this connection I am reminded of another and very remarkable experience. I was already a man of mature years when I stood for the first time on the hill of the Athenian Acropolis, between the temple ruins, looking out on to the blue sea. A feeling of astonishment mingled with my pleasure, which prompted me to say: then it really is true, what we used to be taught at school! How shallow and weak at that age must have been my belief in the real truth of what I heard if I can be so astonished to-day! But I will not emphasize the significance of this experience too much; yet another explanation of my astonishment is possible, which did not strike me at the time, and which is of a



wholly subjective nature and connected with the peculiar character of the place.

All such dogmas as these, then, exact belief in their contents, but not without substantiating their title to this. They claim to be the condensed result of a long process of thought, which is founded on observation and also, certainly, on reasoning; they show how, if one so intends, one can go through this process oneself, instead of accepting the result of it; and the source of the knowledge imparted by the dogma is always added, where it is not, as with geographical statements, self-evident. For instance: the earth is shaped like a globe; the proofs adduced for this are Foucault's pendulum experiment, the phenomena of the horizon and the possibility of circumnavigating the earth. Since it is impracticable, as all concerned realize, to send every school child on a voyage round the world, one is content that the school teaching shall be taken on trust, but one knows that the way to personal conviction is still open.

Let us try to apply the same tests to the dogmas of religion. If we ask on what their claim to be believed is based, we receive three answers, which accord remarkably ill with one another. They deserve to be believed: firstly, because our primal ancestors already believed them; secondly, because we possess proofs, which have been handed down to us from this very period of antiquity; and thirdly, because it is forbidden to raise the question of their authenticity at all. Formerly this presumptuous act was visited with the very severest penalties, and even to-day society is unwilling to see anyone renew it.

This third point cannot but rouse our strongest suspicions. Such a prohibition can surely have only one motive: that society knows very well the uncertain basis of the claim it makes for its religious doctrines. If it were otherwise, the relevant material would certainly be placed most readily at the disposal of anyone who wished to gain conviction for himself. And so we proceed to test the other two arguments with a feeling of mistrust not easily allayed. We ought to believe because our forefathers believed. But these ancestors of ours were far more ignorant than we; they believed in things we could not possibly accept to-day; so the possibility occurs that religious doctrines may also be in this category. The proofs they have bequeathed to us are deposited in writings that themselves bear every trace of being untrustworthy. They are full of contradictions, revisions, and interpolations; where they speak of actual authentic proofs they are themselves of doubtful authenticity. It does not help much if divine revelation is asserted to be the origin of their text or only of their content, for this assertion is itself already a part of those doctrines whose authenticity is to be examined, and no statement can bear its own proof.

Thus we arrive at the singular conclusion that just what might be of the greatest significance for us in our cultural system, the information which should solve for us the riddles of the universe and reconcile us to the troubles of life, that just this has the weakest possible claim to authenticity. We should not be able to bring ourselves to accept anything of as little concern to us as the fact that whales bear young instead of laying eggs, if it were not capable of better proof than this.

This state of things is in itself a very remarkable psychological problem. Let no one think that the foregoing remarks on the impossibility of proving religious doctrines contain anything new. It has been felt at all times, assuredly even by the ancestors who bequeathed this legacy. Probably many of them nursed the same doubts as we, but the pressure imposed on them was too strong for them to have dared to utter them. And since then countless people have been tortured by the same doubts, which they would fain have suppressed because they held themselves in duty bound to believe, and since then many brilliant intellects have been wrecked upon this conflict and many characters have come to grief through the compromises by which they sought a way out.

If all the arguments that are put forward for the authenticity of religious doctrines originate in the past, it is natural to look round and see whether the present, better able to judge in these matters, cannot also furnish such evidence. The whole of the religious system would become infinitely more credible if one could succeed in this way in removing the element of doubt from a single part of it. It is at this point that the activity of the spiritualists comes in; they are convinced of the immortality of the individual soul, and they would demonstrate to us that this one article of religious teaching is free from doubt. Unfortunately they have not succeeded in disproving the fact that the appearances and utterances of their spirits are merely the productions of their own mental activity. They have called up the spirits of the greatest of men, of the most eminent thinkers, but all their utterances and all the information they have received from them have been so foolish and so desperately insignificant that one could find nothing else to believe in but the capacity of the spirits for adapting themselves to the circle of people that had evoked them.

One must now mention two attempts to evade the problem, which both convey the impression of frantic effort. One of them, high-handed in its nature, is old; the other is subtle and modern. The first is the *Credo quia absurdum* of the early Father. It would imply that religious doctrines are outside reason's jurisdiction; they stand above reason. Their truth must be inwardly felt: one does not need to comprehend them. But this *Credo* is only of interest as a voluntary confession; as a decree it has no binding force. Am I to be obliged to believe every absurdity? And if

not, why just this one? There is no appeal beyond reason. And if the truth of religious doctrines is dependent on an inner experience which bears witness to that truth, what is one to make of the many people who do not have that rare experience? One may expect all men to use the gift of reason that they possess, but one cannot set up an obligation that shall apply to all on a basis that only exists for quite a few. Of what significance is it for other people that you have won from a state of ecstasy, which has deeply moved you, an imperturbable conviction of the real truth of the doctrines of religion?

The second attempt is that of the philosophy of 'As If'. It explains that in our mental activity we assume all manner of things, the groundlessness, indeed the absurdity, of which we fully realize. They are called 'fictions', but from a variety of practical motives we are led to behave 'as if' we believed in these fictions. This, it is argued, is the case with religious doctrines on account of their unequalled importance for the maintenance of human society.<sup>1</sup> This argument is not far removed from the *Credo quia absurdum*. But I think that the claim of the philosophy of 'As If' is such as only a philosopher could make. The man whose thinking is not influenced by the wiles of philosophy will never be able to accept it; with the confession of absurdity, of illogicality, there is no more to be said as far as he is concerned. He cannot be expected to forgo the guarantees he demands for all his usual activities just in the matter of his most important interests. I am reminded of one of my children who was distinguished at an early age by a peculiarly marked sense of reality. When the children were told a fairy tale, to which they listened with rapt attention, he would come forward and ask: Is that a true story? Having been told that it was not, he would turn away with an air of disdain. It is to be expected that men will soon behave in like manner toward the religious fairy tales, despite the advocacy of the philosophy of 'As If'.

But at present they still behave quite differently, and in past ages, in spite of their incontrovertible lack of authenticity, religious ideas have exercised the very strongest influence on mankind. This is a fresh psychological problem. We must ask where the inherent strength of these doctrines lies and to what circumstance they owe their efficacy, independent, as it is, of the acknowledgement of the reason.

<sup>1</sup> I hope I am not doing an injustice if I make the author of the philosophy of 'As If' represent a point of view that is familiar to other thinkers also. Cp. H. Vaihinger, *Die Philosophie des Als ob*, Siebente und achte Auflage, 1922. S. 68: 'We include as fictions not merely indifferent theoretical operations but ideational constructions emanating from the noblest minds, to which the noblest part of mankind cling and of which they will not allow themselves to be deprived. Nor is it our object so to deprive them—for as *practical fictions* we leave them all intact; they perish only as *theoretical truths*' (C. K. Ogden's translation).

## VI

I think we have sufficiently paved the way for the answer to both these questions. It will be found if we fix our attention on the psychical origin of religious ideas. These, which profess to be dogmas, are not the residue of experience or the final result of reflection; they are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most insistent wishes of mankind; the secret of their strength is the strength of these wishes. We know already that the terrifying effect of infantile helplessness aroused the need for protection—protection through love—which the father relieved, and that the discovery that this helplessness would continue through the whole of life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father—but this time a more powerful one. Thus the benevolent rule of divine providence allays our anxiety in face of life's dangers, the establishment of a moral world order ensures the fulfilment of the demands of justice, which within human culture have so often remained unfulfilled, and the prolongation of earthly existence by a future life provides in addition the local and temporal setting for these wish-fulfilments. Answers to the questions that tempt human curiosity, such as the origin of the universe and the relation between the body and the soul, are developed in accordance with the underlying assumptions of this system; it betokens a tremendous relief for the individual psyche if it is released from the conflicts of childhood arising out of the father complex, which are never wholly overcome, and if these conflicts are afforded a universally accepted solution.

When I say that they are illusions, I must define the meaning of the word. An illusion is not the same as an error, it is indeed not necessarily an error. Aristotle's belief that vermin are evolved out of dung, to which ignorant people still cling, was an error; so was the belief of a former generation of doctors that *tabes dorsalis* was the result of sexual excess. It would be improper to call these errors illusions. On the other hand, it was an illusion on the part of Columbus that he had discovered a new sea-route to India. The part played by his wish in this error is very clear. One may describe as an illusion the statement of certain nationalists that the Indo-Germanic race is the only one capable of culture, or the belief, which only psycho-analysis destroyed, that the child is a being without sexuality. It is characteristic of the illusion that it is derived from men's wishes; in this respect it approaches the psychiatric delusion, but it is to be distinguished from this, quite apart from the more complicated structure of the latter. In the delusion we emphasize as essential the conflict with reality; the illusion need not be necessarily false, that is to say, unrealizable or incompatible with reality. For instance, a poor girl may

have an illusion that a prince will come and fetch her home. It is possible; some such cases have occurred. That the Messiah will come and found a golden age is much less probable; according to one's personal attitude one will classify this belief as an illusion or as analogous to a delusion. Examples of illusions that have come true are not easy to discover, but the illusion of the alchemists that all metals can be turned into gold may prove to be one. The desire to have lots of gold, as much gold as possible, has been considerably damped by our modern insight into the nature of wealth, yet chemistry no longer considers a transmutation of metals into gold as impossible. Thus we call a belief an illusion when wish-fulfilment is a prominent factor in its motivation, while disregarding its relations to reality, just as the illusion itself does.

If after this survey we turn again to religious doctrines, we may reiterate that they are all illusions, they do not admit of proof, and no one can be compelled to consider them as true or to believe in them. Some of them are so improbable, so very incompatible with everything we have laboriously discovered about the reality of the world, that we may compare them—taking adequately into account the psychological differences—to delusions. Of the reality value of most of them we cannot judge; just as they cannot be proved, neither can they be refuted. We still know too little to approach them critically. The riddles of the universe only reveal themselves slowly to our enquiry, to many questions science can as yet give no answer; but scientific work is our only way to the knowledge of external reality. Again, it is merely illusion to expect anything from intuition or trance; they can give us nothing but particulars, which are difficult to interpret, about our own mental life, never information about the questions that are so lightly answered by the doctrines of religion. It would be wanton to let one's own arbitrary action fill the gap, and according to one's personal estimate declare this or that part of the religious system to be more or less acceptable. These questions are too momentous for that; too sacred, one might say.

At this point it may be objected: well, then, if even the crabbed sceptics admit that the statements of religion cannot be confuted by reason, why should not I believe in them, since they have so much on their side—tradition, the concurrence of mankind, and all the consolation they yield? Yes, why not? Just as no one can be forced into belief, so no one can be forced into unbelief. But do not deceive yourself into thinking that with such arguments you are following the path of correct reasoning. If ever there was a case of facile argument, this is one. Ignorance is ignorance; no right to believe anything is derived from it. No reasonable man will behave so frivolously in other matters or rest content with such feeble grounds for his opinions or for the attitude he adopts; it is only

in the highest and holiest things that he allows this. In reality these are only attempts to delude oneself or other people into the belief that one still holds fast to religion, when one has long cut oneself loose from it. Where questions of religion are concerned people are guilty of every possible kind of insincerity and intellectual misdemeanour. Philosophers stretch the meaning of words until they retain scarcely anything of their original sense; by calling 'God' some vague abstraction which they have created for themselves, they pose as deists, as believers, before the world; they may even pride themselves on having attained a higher and purer idea of God, although their God is nothing but an insubstantial shadow and no longer the mighty personality of religious doctrine. Critics persist in calling 'deeply religious' a person who confesses to a sense of man's insignificance and impotence in face of the universe, although it is not this feeling that constitutes the essence of religious emotion, but rather the next step, the reaction to it, which seeks a remedy against this feeling. He who goes no further, he who humbly acquiesces in the insignificant part man plays in the universe, is, on the contrary, irreligious in the truest sense of the word.

It does not lie within the scope of this enquiry to estimate the value of religious doctrines as truth. It suffices that we have recognized them, psychologically considered, as illusions. But we need not conceal the fact that this discovery strongly influences our attitude to what must appear to many the most important of questions. We know approximately at what periods and by what sort of men religious doctrines were formed. If we now learn from what motives this happened, our attitude to the problem of religion will suffer an appreciable change. We say to ourselves: it would indeed be very nice if there were a God, who was both creator of the world and a benevolent providence, if there were a moral world order and a future life, but at the same time it is very odd that this is all just as we should wish it ourselves. And it would be still odder if our poor, ignorant, enslaved ancestors had succeeded in solving all these difficult riddles of the universe.

GREGORY ZILBOORG

# Sigmund Freud\*

SIGMUND FREUD died at midnight on September 23, 1939. His *Interpretation of Dreams*, which has become the most famous classic of Freudian psychoanalysis, was first published in 1900. Freud might, therefore, be considered an integral part of our twentieth century, since forty of his approximately fifty years of independent scientific work fell in this century.

Freud was a doctor, a neurologist who strayed away from pure neurology very early in his career and soon found himself isolated yet famous, a founder of a new type of medical psychology which was almost exclusively the product of his own creative intuition. There are few, if any, among Freud's pupils or followers who made truly original contributions to that which has become known as psychoanalysis. With the exception of Karl Abraham, it is difficult to think of anyone whose contribution to psychoanalysis was not first suggested by Freud himself. There were, of course, Alfred Adler and Carl Jung, whose names occupy an illustrious place in the history of newer psychopathology. But both Adler and Jung are better known for their rift with Freud around 1911 than for any original contributions they made. This does not mean that Adler and Jung lacked originality, or that their contributions to psychology are negligible. It merely means that their influence on the development of modern psychology is really negligible as compared to that of Freud.

Freud not only stands out as the most prominent and creative of modern psychologists, but—despite the enormous following which he created—he seems to have stood alone all his life. Perhaps it is this fact which has created the myth that Freud was a despotic, willful man countenancing no dissenting voice. Freud does appear to have stood

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alone in the midst of many followers, admirers, devotees, worshipers, vociferous enemies, and detractors. This standing alone is perhaps an eloquent symbol from the standpoint of what psychoanalysis really meant to the scientific thought and culture of the first half of the twentieth century. Let us note, for the time being, that this standing alone did not mean loneliness or personal melancholy. We may for a moment ask ourselves whether the calendar and various dates do not sometimes prove a little inaccurate. Perhaps Freud belonged to the twentieth century only in point of time.

Freud lived almost his whole life in Austria, for the most part in Vienna. He lived in the intimacy of his small circle of adherents, with whom he would exchange views and case histories. Less than half a dozen times in his long life did he address himself to audiences other than his small group of followers: in 1909 he came to America to give five lectures on psychoanalysis on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Clark University; in 1915-17 he gave a course of lectures at the University of Vienna.

In other words, as we study the surface aspects of Freud's life we might gain the impression that we are dealing here with a provincial person, and perhaps a provincial mind. Yet, Freud's interests were universal; he merely did not appear to be restless, nor did he like to appear "prominent."

It is as if he lived just a little above the *mêlée* and yet worked steadily with human beings and their problems. When he was finally persuaded to leave Vienna when it was overtaken by the Nazis, he made his way to London and there, old and uprooted, he continued to work with his wonted assiduity, preparing new and correcting old manuscripts, and seeing patients until a very short time before his death. To work seemed to Freud synonymous with to live. World-shaking events, the Nazis' burning his books and taking the few meager possessions he had saved during his strenuous and industrious life, seem to have made little difference as far as working was concerned. Freud was not indifferent to what was going on around him. There are many signs of his deep and painful concern about the state of nations, but his industry and interest could not be impaired by history, no matter how bloody and noisy. One is reminded of Rachmaninov, who was a monarchist by conviction and of an ultraconservative political temperament, sitting and working in his apartment in Moscow, writing a new symphony in the very midst of the Communist revolution.

This devotion to work and thought is characteristic, but somehow it does not seem to be of the twentieth century. Freud was once asked what it was he would consider the ultimate in being normal, and he answered: "*Arbeiten und lieben*"—to work and to love. This devotion to work is not



of our times, the ideal of which seems to be to retire as early in life as possible. "Normal," "healthy," in the Freudian sense thus always carried a connotation of human values, such as unremitting creative effort and love of one's neighbor. This ability to work and this inspired, humble, but persevering devotion to a mass of human problems while remaining above and beyond the *mêlée* is illustrated or suggestively implied by two more facts: 1) From 1922 on Freud did not attend any of the psychoanalytical congresses, which fact emphasized once more his inordinate capacity to stand alone; and 2) Freud suffered for over twenty years from a severe, progressive ailment which destroyed a good part of his jawbone; he was operated upon several times; he needed constant expert surgical supervision—he was in continual and considerable pain. He stood alone, "above" this physical pain, and he continued to work.

Many of his followers and admirers compared him with Goethe. Simmel, Zweig, Thomas Mann recalled Goethe in connection with Freud. In 1930 Freud received the Goethe prize for literature. Freud himself acknowledged his great spiritual debt to Goethe, and he quoted from one of Goethe's essays the following words which particularly appealed to him.

"Nature has neither language nor speech, but she creates tongues and hearts through which she feels and speaks. . . . Her laws are unchangeable—she has few springs of action, but they never wear out; they are always operative, always manifold. . . . Even the most unnatural things are natural. . . . Whoever does not see nature everywhere, does not see her at all. . . . Her crown is love; and only through love can we understand her."<sup>1</sup>

It may be added, however, that unlike Goethe, Freud lived a simple life, devoid of the egocentricity which was characteristic of that "last representative of the Renaissance." When Freud was asked to write his autobiography, he wrote what amounted to a brief history of the psychoanalytic movement. All his life Freud lived quietly with and within the circle of his family, to which were added hardly more than half a dozen devoted friends, pioneers in psychoanalysis.

In his manner of living and thinking, in his almost devotional attitude to work and to the ideals this work was promoting, Freud reminds one of the sixteenth-century humanists. With this difference, however: Freud's ideal, his god, was not religious charity and human perfection in this faith and charity, but science, knowledge, enlightened reason. This was

<sup>1</sup> Cited by E. Simmel, "Sigmund Freud: the Man and His Work." *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1940, Vol. IX, pp. 163-176.

his "illusion," he was willing to admit; it was his "mythology" as he himself once stated; the names of his faith were *Logos* and *Eros*.

What has been underscored here about Freud's personality has been done in order to suggest that the immense influence of psychoanalysis, the impact with which it took hold of many branches of human knowledge and endeavor, was not due to Freud's personal pressure and active leadership. He was always ready to step into the background with a detached dignity.

This does not mean, of course, that Freud's followers escaped the all-too-human tendency to raise to a throne one who preferred his desk chair. A brilliant contemporary, the late Fritz Wittels, wrote: "The trouble arises from the suppression of free criticism within the Society. Suppression makes people snappish. The members have metapsychological leanings, and I am afraid they are inclined to stray into scholastic paths. . . . Freud is treated as a demigod, or even as a god. No criticism of his utterances is permitted. Sadger tells us that Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* is the psychoanalyst's Bible. This is no mere figure of speech. The faithful disciples regard one another's books as of no account. They recognize no authority but Freud's; they rarely read or quote one another. When they quote it is from the Master, that they may give the pure milk of the Word. The medical element has passed into the background. The philosophers hold sway."<sup>2</sup>

Freud's own attitude toward all this was not that of crowned king or anointed master, but rather human and simple. He is reported once to have said about the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society, "The study of psychoanalysis seems to awaken people's worst instincts!" He had an enormous capacity to rise above the smallness which is found in the best among us, and to continue to stand aside watching others as well as himself.

Fritz Wittels wrote a book on Freud which was on the whole a keen and harsh book, honest and to a great extent uncomplimentary. It was written after Wittels temporarily broke with Freud some time after 1910. Wittels sent a copy of the book to Freud, who answered in part as follows:

"You have given me a Christmas present which is very largely occupied with my own personality. The failure to send a word of thanks for such a gift would be an act of rudeness only to be accounted for by very peculiar motives. Fortunately, no such motives exist in this case. Your book is by no means hostile; it is not unduly indiscreet; and it manifests the serious interest in the topic which was to be anticipated in so able a writer as yourself.

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Wittels, *Sigmund Freud; His Personality, His Teaching, & His School* (translated from the German). New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1924, p. 143.

"I need hardly say that I neither expected nor desired the publication of such a book. It seems to me that the public has no concern with my personality and can learn nothing from an account of it, so long as my case (for manifold reasons) cannot be expounded without any reserves whatever. But you have thought otherwise. Your own detachment from me, which you deem an advantage, entails serious drawbacks none the less. You know too little of the object of study, and you have not been able to avoid the danger of straining the facts a little in your analytical endeavors. Moreover, I am inclined to think that your adoption of Stekel's standpoint, and the fact that you contemplate the object of study from this outlook cannot but have impaired the accuracy of your discernment.

"In some respects, I think there are positive distortions, and I believe these to be the outcome of a preconceived notion of yours. You think that a great man must have such and such merits and defects, and must display certain extreme characteristics; and you hold that I belong to the category of great men. This is why you ascribe to me all sorts of qualities, many of which are mutually conflicting. Much of general interest might be said about this matter, but unfortunately, your relationship to Stekel precludes further attempts on my part to clear up the misunderstanding.

"On the other hand, I am glad to acknowledge that your shrewdness has enabled you to detect many things which are well known to myself. For instance, you are right in inferring that I have often been compelled to make detours when following my own path. You are right, too, in thinking that I have no use for other people's ideas when they are presented to me at an inopportune moment. (Still, as regards the latter point, I think you might have defended me from the accusation that I am repudiating ideas when I am merely unable for [the moment] to pass judgment on them or to elaborate them.) But I am delighted to find that you do me full justice in the matter of my relationship with Adler. . . .

"I realize that you may have occasion to revise your text in view of a second edition. With an eye to this possibility, I enclose a list of suggested emendations. These are based on trustworthy data, and are quite independent of my own prepossessions. Some of them relate to matters of trifling importance, but some of them will perhaps lead you to reverse or modify certain inferences. The fact that I send you these corrections is a token that I value your work though I cannot wholly approve it."<sup>3</sup>

If Freud disapproved of any attempt at bringing his own personality into the internecine debates of contending and dissenting psychoanalysts,

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

he did not hesitate from the very outset to take himself as an object of observation whenever the scientific study of the deeper layers of human psychology required. He exposed some of his own unconscious impulses and propensities with utmost candor whenever he wanted to give a particularly poignant illustration of the workings of the unconscious in the formation and the structure of dreams. In this respect he represented the best tradition in the history of medicine. Doctors, whether pure clinicians or research workers, have always been ready to make experimental self-observations as to the effect of this or that drug, or this or that condition of the atmosphere, or even this or that germ, on our bodily functions.

How the young Freud started as a research worker in brain pathology, from which work he learned nothing about human psychology; how he went to study with Charcot; how he studied hypnotism, in which Liébault and Bernheim were excelling at the time; how Freud worked with Dr. Josef Breuer, a general practitioner in Vienna, on their first cases of hysteria; how Freud's first psychological hypotheses as to the role of sexuality and of childhood in the development of neuroses were formulated; how he first conceived of the nature of the unconscious—all this has been told many times by Freud himself, and by his pupils and friends and enemies. These interesting and fundamental yet so simple events need not be reiterated here.

We are dealing now not so much with the question of how psychoanalysis came into being—but of how psychoanalysis expanded its influence and grew, in the very atmosphere of negation and hostility in which it first began to function, and what it has become. More than that: we are concerned with the problem of the essence and the strength of psychoanalysis, the influence of which is now felt in science and literature, in religious discussions, and even in the clinical work of the internist and the surgeon. What is the secret of this new psychology, and how new is it?

The expansion of psychoanalysis may be judged from a few simple illustrations. By 1927 John Rickman, the English psychoanalyst, had compiled a complete psychoanalytic bibliography. This bibliography lists 4739 titles, published in many languages and in many lands. Of these nearly five thousand titles, 427 are by Freud. (This includes translations of some of his articles into various languages.) The first ten volumes of Freud's *Gesammelte Schriften* appeared by 1924. His complete works first appeared—paradoxically enough—in Spain, in a good translation into Spanish, in 1922. During the twenty-three years which have followed the publication of Rickman's *Index Psychoanalyticus*, almost another five thousand, if not more, separate articles and books on psychoanalysis and

closely related subjects have been published. Special psychoanalytic journals began to be published in America, England, France, India, Japan, Argentina. Institutes for psychoanalytic training have dotted the map of many a country. Berlin, Vienna, Paris, London, New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Buenos Aires, are only a few of the many which have been or still are functioning in the Old and the New World.

A psychoanalyst is no longer some kind of neurologist or psychiatrist or especially trained layman who specializes in the treatment of neuroses. There are now psychoanalysts who do not treat sick people but who are research workers in the fields of art, anthropology, sociology and social psychology. There are psychiatrists who are avowedly not psychoanalysts but whose work is psychoanalytically oriented. There are ministers of the gospel who study psychoanalysis in order to use it in their practice of pastoral psychology and pastoral counseling. And this is not all. Child guidance and educational psychology have been deeply affected by Freud's psychoanalytic hypotheses and principles. In many schools and colleges today there are attending psychologists and psychiatrists whose orientation is deeply influenced by Freudian thought.

The field of criminology has been brought into the main stream of psychoanalytic influence. The Second International Congress of Criminology, held in Paris in September, 1950, had a special section on psychoanalysis. More and more, juvenile and regular courts of justice find it necessary to listen to opinions which are based essentially on psychoanalytic principles. The old English tradition which culminated in the famous McNaghten rule as a test of insanity has been deeply undermined by the newer psychological understanding of the criminal mind and the criminal act. In England, and particularly in the United States, an immense volume of research in the field of forensic psychiatry has been done, and expert testimony in the courts has been correspondingly affected. In many medical schools, psychoanalysis is taught either under its own name or as a part of general psychopathology and clinical psychiatry.

This immense influence, in extension as well as in depth, in all its ramifications, has as its source the work of Freud himself. He originated child analysis when he reported the famous case of "Little Hans." He originated the newer trends in criminology when he described people whose antisocial behavior or psychological symptoms are caused by an unconscious sense of guilt. He originated psychoanalytic anthropology when he published his *Totem and Taboo*. He originated the newer trends in social psychology and psychoanalytic sociology when he published his study of *Group Psychology and Civilization and Its Discontents*. He originated

the psychoanalytic investigation of literature when he published his study on *Delusion and Dreams in Jensen's* [novel] "*Gradiva*." His study of Michelangelo's Moses revealed the methodological approach toward research in the psychology of art or the artist. Ultimately, his *The Future of an Illusion* and *Moses and Monotheism* opened one of the most passionate and revealing and instructive debates on the problem of religious faith and the psychology and psychopathology of certain religious trends.

You will notice the words "originated" or "opened" have been used here repeatedly. For, despite many thoughtful and fruitful contributions by many followers of Freud, and many gifted, eclectic students of the psychoanalytic method as applied to many fields of human endeavor, the problems mentioned are more repeatedly stated than solved. Many are inclined to see in this fact a decline in the influence of psychoanalysis, or the recognition of its fundamental inefficacy as a method. Whether this is true or not, only history will answer. What is undoubtedly true is that fifty years is for a science what childhood is for a human being. Not enough time has elapsed for the student (and even less for the casual observer) to be able to form a definite opinion as to the permanence of the contributions made by psychoanalysis. Its vitality and power remain amply demonstrated in the fact that psychoanalysis has been a potent factor in determining many a direction of our thought (scientific and artistic) during the past half-century.

There is another reason why psychoanalysis has displayed so much vitality in so short a period and at the same time, despite its almost protean influence, appears to have solved so few problems. This reason is the curious fact that psychoanalysis is not easily defined. The term is very popular, but it has become also very vague. It has come to mean many different things to many people. Among the more or less intelligent but uninitiated one hears not infrequently: "He went to a doctor the other day and had himself psychoanalyzed." Here, to be analyzed obviously means to be diagnosed (as regards one's psychological troubles). There is also a rather familiar expression that has acquired almost an idiomatic character: "Don't psychoanalyze me, but let us talk it over." Here, psychoanalysis obviously means probing into one's motives, or questioning one's sincerity.

The semantic confusion which has developed around the term "psychoanalysis" is enhanced by many inferential concepts which are only vaguely related to psychoanalysis itself. To some psychoanalysis means sexual freedom, scientifically and benevolently bestowed upon one by a respectable science. To others psychoanalysis also means cold faithlessness to one's family and to God, as if it were devilishly contrived and mechanically engrafted upon innocent people by some sort of pseudoscientific, medico-

psychological imperialism which wants to conquer the family, the school, the Church, the State, medicine itself, and society in the broadest sense of the word. Somewhere between these exaggerated misconceptions, people talk very seriously about psychoanalysis. But even those who are earnestly initiated and professionally skilled are hard put to give a comprehensive definition of psychoanalysis. The point is that such a definition is really impossible without a number of qualifications, parenthetic insertions, and cross references. The reason for this state of affairs is that psychoanalysis is not one thing. It is many things. Freud himself sensed this fact very early, and seems later to have become convinced of it.

From the very beginning, Freud the physician, the doctor whose early job seemed to be to treat sick people, found little intellectual companionship among physicians. His friendship with Wilhelm Fliess<sup>4</sup> during the very beginning of his career was fruitful. For some fifteen years after he returned from the Charcot Clinic in Paris (1886), Freud kept in close touch with Fliess and confided in him his preoccupation with the newer problems of human psychology as he saw them arise out of his study of the content of dreams and infantile sexual trends. In due course this friendship resolved itself from the purely scientific point of view, as did his collaboration with Breuer when the latter failed to follow Freud in his conclusion as to the unconscious sexual motivations of the neuroses—which Breuer and Freud had observed and studied together in full harmony for a while. The unconscious Breuer could accept; the unconscious *sexual* motivations he could not.

For a while Freud stood quite alone. Then scientific friends and collaborators began to gather around him; many of them were laymen. Freud began to be inclined to think that to become an analyst medical education was not entirely, if at all, necessary. Some saw in this attitude of Freud's an expression of resentment against the way the conservative medical profession had treated him, driving him into scientific and professional isolation. I doubt whether Freud felt piqued by his medical colleagues any more than by society as a whole—educators, philosophers, clergymen, intellectuals, and various and sundry volunteer moralists who rejected him from the very outset. Apparently, having found himself in involuntary solitude, Freud gradually found it necessary to look around for kindred minds, or let in those who first came to him and sought a place at the table at which he sat studying.

Among the many nonmedical men who came, we find Hanns Sachs, who later emigrated to take an honorable and respected place in Boston and at Harvard. Sachs was by education a lawyer; he became a psycho-

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*. Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, Abhandlungen und Notizen aus den Jahren 1887-1902, London, Imago, 1950.

analyst-teacher and one of the most profound psychoanalytical students of Shakespeare and of medieval painting. We find among them also Theodor Reik, who before his digressive, post-emigration development was one of the best psychoanalytic students of the Bible, of Anatole France, and of literature in general. Later on there came Otto Rank, whose studies of myths and mythological traditions were well-nigh revolutionary, and inspired in their depth of insight. Still later there was Géza Róheim, the psychoanalytic anthropologist par excellence.

Freud seems to have arrived ultimately at the unshakable conclusion that psychoanalysis is not exclusively a branch of medicine, and that it is a special field itself requiring special training and aptitude. He never fully defined this field. I would assume without much risk of being in error that, if pressed for a definition of the field of psychoanalysis, Freud would have preferred the laconic answer: Man. Even today, it is difficult to define more specifically the field of psychoanalysis.

Is it a curative art? The answer is yes. It was born out of medicine despite medicine's own initial repudiation of psychoanalysis. It was born as a system of technical procedures for the treatment of those more or less mild but widespread and stubborn afflictions generally called neuroses. As a curative art, psychoanalysis deals with sick people, learns from them, and tries to cure them. In other words, psychoanalysis is a part of medical discipline.

But, is psychoanalysis only a curative art? The answer is no. For psychoanalysis seeks to penetrate into the deeper layers of human motivations and seeks to formulate general laws which govern the unconscious and its expression in or influence on man's manifest behavior. In other words, psychoanalysis is, or legitimately strives to become, a system of individual psychology. What is striking in this connection is this: the material obtained for the formulation of such a system is obtained from the analyses of neurotic children and adults—in other words from “handling” pathological conditions of men by analyzing them—that is, by treating people afflicted with these conditions.

It would seem then, as it did seem to Freud, that the nonmedical, general psychologist who does psychoanalytic research cannot pursue this research without *treating* people and trying to cure them. This is exactly what happened in psychoanalysis. Freud established and recognized a specialty called psychoanalysis, in which research and curative endeavor are intimately connected (they are indivisible, as a matter of fact). For some time the question of *lay analysis* was discussed with detachment as well as with passionate professional subjectivity by the medical and nonmedical members of the International Psychoanalytic Association. It is a question that has not yet been solved. The psychoanalytic societies



in the United States have more or less adopted the principle that in so far as psychoanalysis is a curative procedure, whatever else it may be only a doctor of medicine may be accepted for psychoanalytic training. But this principle is not strictly followed even in the United States. For there is need for social scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists, and religious leaders whose contributions to psychoanalysis are as essential as those of the medical analyst. A medical psychoanalyst cannot at one and the same time be all of these things—although it might theoretically be most desirable that he be a true encyclopedic, civilized man.

As a result of these contingencies and needs, psychoanalysis has become a separate field in which anthropology, psychology, sociology, moral philosophy, criminology, and psychiatry are all brought together in the search for a special scientific synthesis. It is this circumstance that makes psychoanalysis so confusing and so complex. It is not one thing yet. It is every one of those branches of human knowledge mentioned above, and yet it is not each one of those things separately. Like man himself, it is all those things together which only in theory could be considered separately. Its only meaning is within the broad frame of reference mentioned above, without which it has no existence—and that frame of reference, be it said again, is man, man in his life totality.

Since man is the only frame of reference (and social mass behavior is also man in a special guise), it is from dealing with man that psychoanalysis learns. And the source of learning is always the same: it is the sick individual, the neurotic, the deviant, the criminal—in short, the pathological. Whatever the social scientist or anthropologist observes in undeveloped, commonly but mistakenly called “primitive” people, he cannot fully understand unless he also studies pathological individuals in our society, who either still seem to be socially tolerable and are ambulatory sick people, or who are already so compromised that they are to be found only in hospitals for the mentally ill and in penal institutions. In other words, the “material” must come from direct observations of living people whose innermost mainsprings of behavior cannot be brought to the surface for the observer to see and the student to study and the research worker to find and the scientist to comprehend—without psychoanalytic investigation. The psychoanalyst thus deals with all manner of abnormalities in order to find the “normal,” just as the clinical pathologist deals with abnormal tissues cut out of human bodies, or with dead bodies carefully studied at the autopsy table and mutilated for study in the laboratory. The pathologist who is constantly so busy with dead tissues and dead bodies, is so occupied not because he enjoys contemplating the frailty and the rottenness of human flesh, but because he is interested in the secrets of the vigor and liveliness of the human

body, because he seeks the secret or restoration to health and prolongation of healthy human life. He must descend into the very depth of the stench of death, and do so without undue anxiety, in order to learn how to eliminate as much of it as possible from among the living and bring out the full flavor of healthy, vigorous life.

The psychoanalyst is in a situation similar to, yet quite different from, that of the clinical pathologist. His situation is different because it is denied to him to study the *silent* end-products of life. Dead people have no psychology; you can study the human mind only in the living. The psychonalyst cannot cut out a piece of a man's mind and send it to the laboratory for examination. In mental sickness and in health man remains one and indivisible, and the psychoanalyst must study him in his totality, in his indivisibility. However, the position of the psychoanalyst has this in common with the pathologist: he must descend into the lowermost strata of man's life—into the abnormal, the perverted, the criminal—in order to learn what man is as a normal, nonperverted, noncriminal individual. The psychoanalyst is no more immoral or criminal or perverted because of the special subject of his studies than the pathologist is a lover of death, or the student of the best conditions of the soil is a lover of worms and manure.

Freud's descent into the unconscious of the individual patient aroused so much suspicion and disgust among the conventional and sensitively prudish formalistic scientists of his day, just because he so simply and so serenely described the inner hatreds, the criminal drives, the sexual deviations, the so many other unsavory features which are stored up within us. He found them there and described what he found, and his startled, unheeding contemporary colleagues mistook it all for Freud's predilection for human perversity.

This attitude, not uncommon in the history of science whenever a new discovery about man and his world is made, has done a great deal to confuse the issues and to cause the fact to be overlooked that during the short span of a mere quarter of a century, or at most thirty years, psychoanalysis became a new and separate discipline, albeit one not yet easily definable. Its medical aspect is a part in itself, and perhaps (Freud himself was at times inclined to think so) not the most important part of psychoanalysis. Just as chemistry and physics and biology are used by medicine and produce chemotherapy and physical therapy and bio-therapy, so psychoanalysis is used by medicine, by medical psychology or clinical psychiatry, and a special technique has been developed called psychoanalytic therapy.

At first even the therapeutic aspect of psychoanalysis (although it was for a time the only one psychoanalysis possessed) was rather restricted.

Even as late as the close of the 'twenties psychoanalysts, particularly the European psychoanalysts who were closer to Freud, were inclined to think that they should limit their therapeutic work to cases of more or less mild neuroses. The severer forms of mental illness did every now and then come within the purview of the psychoanalyst, but only in isolated cases. The severe chronic mental illnesses were shied away from, and institutionalized cases on the whole were not considered as proper subjects for psychoanalytic treatment.

There were the beginnings of psychoanalytic psychiatry of course, here and there. Simmel (later of Los Angeles, where he died) opened in Berlin a psychiatric sanatorium toward the close of the 'twenties, where psychoanalysis was used. Viktor Tausk wrote on some aspects of schizophrenia. Nunberg wrote on catatonia. Ruth Mack Brunswick worked psychoanalytically with a chronic case; it was an old schizophrenic whom Freud had described some years previously; Freud saw the patient when the latter was still very young, and he became known in the psychoanalytic literature as the "Wolfman." Freud also gave his own detailed psychoanalytic views of the case of Schreber (1911). He did not know the case personally, but he studied carefully the description of this case given in detail by the patient himself, the demented German judge who suffered from what is called today a paranoid schizophrenia, a form of what used to be called—and some laymen still call—"persecutory insanity."

However, psychiatry, the field of the severer forms of mental illness, was never a strong point of Freud's own education or of his studies and fundamental formulations. One might say that Freud, and with him European psychoanalysis, stood aloof from psychiatry. It was in America that psychoanalytic psychiatry developed its own roots during the decade or so preceding World War II. During that War a number of psychoanalysts served in the armed forces and did a great deal toward establishing a psychoanalytic understanding of psychiatric war casualties. Military psychiatry in America is to a great extent influenced by psychoanalytic psychopathology. During the War the chief of psychiatry in the United States Army was himself a trained psychoanalyst.

While it is taken here for granted that the reader is familiar with the fact that Freud dealt with the unconscious, with infantile sexuality and other obscure, instinctual drives of man, and while it is not the writer's intention to dwell in detail on how these discoveries were made, a word or two about some special aspects of these discoveries is definitely in order. However, before we can go into the substance of these findings, it would be well to mention the general skepticism and opposition with which Freud's first statements were met.

There were specific reasons, of course, why psychoanalysis should have been met with considerable opposition, but it would be a mistake and an overestimation of the meaning of this opposition if we were not to bear in mind that everything new, *even* in science and medicine, is always met with suspicion and even arrogant opposition. The bearers and keepers of "established scientific truths" are human beings, and as such they do not particularly like anything new. A new idea, a new finding in science—like a new shoe—must fit very well but must feel "comfortably old" in order to be accepted. That feeling of being comfortably old is seldom aroused by anything new unless it is something that could be at once capitalized upon and used, unless it offers immediate tangible returns. Freud was right when he met the "convinced" opposition by saying: "No one has a right to conviction (on these matters) who has not worked at this subject for many years, as I have, and has not himself experienced the same new and astonishing discoveries." <sup>5</sup> And Dalbièz, a nonanalyst and respectful opponent of many aspects of psychoanalysis, states: "Many neuropsychiatrists, some of whom are very distinguished scholars in their own fields but who had no *personal* experience with psychoanalysis, express some very trenchant judgments against it. It is necessary to remind them that even when dealing with the subject of psychoanalysis one must earn the right to have an opinion." <sup>6</sup>

Freud's professional and social difficulties with his contemporaries lay not only in the novelty of his findings but in his inability to demonstrate to the external senses, particularly to the human eye, the existence of the unconscious. How can you *see* the unconscious? And people love to *see*; man has a strong and very naive faith in what he sees with his own eyes, or what he thinks he sees. Freud was unable to make the unconscious, and so many things that go with it, directly visible—and no one was inclined to believe him any more than they would at first believe Louis Pasteur.

In this connection it is worth-while citing an example of what might be called the blindness of the enlightened and the prejudice of free minds.

Pierre Janet was one of the greatest psychiatrists of France, a man to whom the medical world owes a great deal. He was one of the truly great predecessors, a somewhat older contemporary, of Freud; Janet survived Freud by some eight years.

Some time in 1889 Janet reported a case of hysterical amnesia, but despite the fact that Janet by means of hypnosis made the patient (her

<sup>5</sup> *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., & International Psycho-Analytical Institute, 1933, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> Dalbièz, *La Methode psychanalytique et la doctrine Freudienne*, Desclée de Brouwer & Cie., 1936. t. II, p. 239.

name was Marie) recover a series of forgotten painful memories, he failed to recognize the psychological implications of the phenomenon. Each time such a memory was uncovered, another set of symptoms of which Marie suffered would disappear. The patient, *as reported by Janet himself*, had clearly been suffering from painful—as we say, traumatic—events since she reached puberty, events which she had forgotten and which seemed to have become transformed into symptoms. The relationship between the recovery of the memory and the disappearance of the symptoms—such as abnormal trembling, or anesthetics—appeared obvious to any reader of Janet's own excellent description, for Janet was an excellent clinician.

Three years later, in 1892, in his famous book on *The Mental State of Hysterics*, Janet returned to the case of Marie and stated that he was unable to understand the mechanism of the circumscribed form of amnesia of which Marie suffered. He vaguely ascribed it all to a "diminution of the synthesizing power of the mind." Janet appeared in all this the honest direct scientist that he was, who would not conceal from himself or others his own ignorance and his impotence before a force of nature which he did not understand. Just one year later, in 1893, Freud and Breuer's first report on "The Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" appeared. Within a short time after the appearance of this communication, Pierre Janet stated in the second edition of his *Psychological Methods of Treatment*:

"The lessons of Charcot on traumatic neuroses and my own studies became the point of departure for a very remarkable new teaching and interpretation and treatment of neuroses. I want to talk about the studies of Professor Freud (of Vienna) and his numerous pupils. I want to speak of Psychoanalysis. Mr. Freud seems, without critical judgment, to have taken as a point of departure my first studies on the existence and the nature of subconscious phenomena in hysterics. I am a little sorry, because these studies were in need of critical verification and confirmation. This author (Freud) has endeavored to transform in a very original manner (my) conception of the psychological analysis of traumatic memories and of the subconscious, and he generalizes on the subject, exaggerating beyond measure."<sup>7</sup>

The above quotation from Janet is not given here in order to raise the question of priority in the discovery of the unconscious. Janet was given full recognition by Freud; but Janet, the Frenchman and the psychopathologist who wrote a warm-hearted preface to the first French edition of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, seems to have been embarrassed

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Janet, *op. cit.*, and Madeleine Cavé, *L'Oeuvre paradoxale de Freud*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, pp. 142, 144.

by the credit which Freud rightfully gave him. Janet demurred. Be it noted parenthetically that Janet uses the word *subconscious*, a term many nonanalysts use. The accepted term was and is the "unconscious," as Freud first used it.

Janet's attempt to stake out a priority and at the same time enter a somewhat embarrassed and embarrassing demurrer is significant for a special reason. Here we see a singular phenomenon. The man who first observed clinically the manifestation and the power of the unconscious described it thoroughly, and failed to understand it just as thoroughly; and as soon as Freud's momentous communication was published, the man who saw it first without seeing it claimed that he saw it first and yet disclaimed that what he saw first the others saw well when they saw it later and independently.

Evidently, that which is unconscious in others is not easily seen, because we are prone to keep the same or similar things in the captivity of our own unconscious, and we are not free to escape from this captivity without special measures. Something holds us back. There seems to be a spontaneous, automatic, *unconscious* alliance with the unconscious, which is unknown to us yet so powerful that it keeps us unfree, resists our efforts toward freedom: Freud called this *resistance*, and he always meant by it automatic, involuntary, unconscious resistance which can be overcome only by such extraordinary measures as Janet—and at first also Freud and Breuer—used: hypnosis. Freud later found a method more constant in results than that of hypnosis, and more powerful because the individual under treatment remained conscious throughout the procedure: the method of free association.

Whatever the method, it was a discovery of the first order. However, it is clear now that it was *not* the unconscious that Freud discovered, but its power to hold us in its sway, unbeknown to us, to keep us in a state of unfreedom, to prevent us from doing, seeing, and thinking what we want to do and look at and think about. In other words, it was the *dynamic power* of the unconscious part of our psychic apparatus that Freud discovered, and not the unconscious itself. This dynamic power is very singular; to use one of Freud's own expressions about neuroses, there is something demonic about it. It comes as if from nowhere.

As for the unconscious, it is the seat and the repository of all our instinctual impulses, of all our painful and harsh, deep resentments, of all the hatreds and aggressions we dare not face and admit. It is a repository of volcanic forces and dammed-up, twisted psychological energies. It knows neither space nor time; experiences of our earliest childhood lie buried in it, like burning embers ready to set us aflame at any time, at any age. At fifty, we might still be—and we frequently

are—under the spell and fire of some of our earliest childhood experiences, and we might cry and vituperate and suffer and tremble as if it had all just happened, just now.

Indeed, that which is unconscious knows no time, no logic, no contradictions or similarities. The unconscious is elemental, unpredictable, and devilishly captious, giving the false impression of possessing a real, rational will. If we succeed in uncovering the unconscious and exposing it to our own conscious, comprehending gaze, we acquire a new, momentarily terrifying but always liberating knowledge of ourselves, and an insight into the behavior of others. No wonder that the discovery of the power of the unconscious and the gaining acquaintance with it offered man a new knowledge and a new freedom. We need not go into the validity or the lack of validity of various claims which have been made in connection with this discovery. What is of particular interest is the impact the discovery made, and how sustained this impact remained through the years.

Writing an obituary note on Freud, Simmel remarked: "This knowledge (of the unconscious) will enable man to master the elementary instinctual forces of human nature and to direct his energies towards a constructive end and so make life livable for all."<sup>8</sup> Simmel considers Freud the founder of "the natural science of human passions, and only with the help of this new science can man hope to regain the full power of his intellect and find a way out of his conflicting material interests."<sup>9</sup> Freud himself hardly shared Simmel's optimism in the power of psychoanalytically acquired freedom to reconstruct and save the world, but he was a profound believer in the liberating power which is acquired when our unconscious is exposed to the light of reason.

Simmel, one of the oldest disciples of Freud, even visualized the land of promise through the telescope of psychoanalysis. Through the discovery of the dynamic power of the unconscious he saw a new orientation of almost all the disciplines which deal with man: psychology, biology, sociology, anthropology, criminology and, above all, child psychology and education. "Children are being liberated from misunderstanding by their educators." According to Simmel, education is the practice of preventive psychology. Psychoanalysis thus protects the individual from many illnesses, and protects the community from the asocial and anti-social attitudes of potentially psychopathological individuals. This is not rhapsodic utopianism. Simmel spoke the mind and the hope of the many who sought a way out of man's slavery to his own unconscious passions,

<sup>8</sup> Simmel, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

the expression of which they saw in the holocausts of the closing decade and a half of the present half-century.

In a recent monograph on *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*,<sup>10</sup> we find that the unconscious was called by one critic "The Machiavelli" of psychic life; another referred to the libido as the "loathsome dragon that wallows in the unconscious." Aldous Huxley looked upon the unconscious as "a sort of a den or inferno to which all bad thoughts and desires are sent." Unfortunately, it may be added, they are sent to the inferno not to be tortured or destroyed but for safekeeping, that they may later torture us from their hiding place and occasionally even destroy us. G. K. Chesterton could not, of course, discuss so serious a thing as the unconscious without a sardonic "dig" which seems to uncover at once Chesterton's all-too-human flight from the unconscious and his fear of it—which is as much an act of recognition as open acknowledgment itself. He spoke of the unconscious as "some ridiculous mythology about every man having inside him a sort of aged and microcephalous monkey"—a pretty accurate, it might be said, if somewhat journalistic and skeptical description of the unconscious.

What Freud's discovery of the dynamic power of the unconscious meant to the sensitive artists of the written word, to the intellectual group of the younger generation, will be discussed later. For the present, it may be noted that some idea of what Freud's discovery meant might be gleaned in the writings of Thomas Mann and particularly of Stefan Zweig, whose tragic death as an expatriate from Nazified Austria cast a deep shadow over the world at war. Zweig understood Freud's psychoanalysis, its deepest "cultural mission," as few of us do, and his words are therefore of particular import. Zweig recalled Schiller, who said that "although by the dim light of everyday emotions the secret working of the forces of desire remains hidden away from sight, it becomes all the more conspicuous and stupendous when passion is strongly aroused. . . . If for the other realms of nature there should arise a Linnaeus to classify impulses and inclinations, he would greatly astonish mankind."<sup>11</sup>

There are many prophetic words uttered by great writers of drama and literature, but few would fit Freud's discoveries more aptly than these of Schiller. For through the study of the unconscious Freud was led to the study of dreams, and then to the study of our instinctual drives, among which the sexual one (in the particular Freudian sense) took first place. And finally Freud became, in a certain sense of the word, the Linnaeus of modern psychology.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick J. Hoffman. Baton Rouge, La., Louisiana State University Press, 1945.

<sup>11</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Mental Healers*. New York, Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1932, p. 429.



Perhaps it is worth recalling here also the words of Balzac: "How little attention has hitherto been paid to the happenings of sleep, which reveal man's double life! Is not there scope for a new science in this phenomenon? . . . It certainly indicates the frequent severance of our two natures. Besides, I have myself had evidence that our latent senses are better than our obvious ones."<sup>12</sup> Balzac here sounds a little utilitarian and curious, in a manner quite characteristic of and legitimate for a literary as opposed to a medical man. But in Balzac's day even the intuitive presentiment of the then new science of this phenomenon could not carry the emotional and historical yearning which Schiller in his day, and Zweig so many generations after Schiller, felt so keenly, so painfully, so bitterly.

Zweig was very perspicacious in his estimate of the Freudian revolution in the history of psychology, for Zweig was both the child who suffered at the hands of the nineteenth century and the man who rebelled against its fetters and was crushed by the bankruptcy of the nineteenth century, which was so tragically evidenced by the first decades of the twentieth.

"Speaking strictly, therefore," says Zweig, "we may say that the morality of the nineteenth century does not really touch the core of the moral problem. . . . Acting on the absurd belief that a thing which is covered up out of sight ceases to exist, for three or four generations the morality of western civilization deliberately blinked all moral and sexual problems."<sup>13</sup>

To Zweig the Freudian revolution was particularly remarkable, because Freud did it all alone with a unique courage. What appealed further to Zweig was Freud's urge to self-knowledge in the name of the freedom of man. Neither Zweig nor Freud conceived of this freedom as looseness or willfulness or a sort of quasi-scientific, lofty captiousness and indulgence of whim. They yearned for the liberation from the unknown. They rose against the established order of serfdom in which civilized man spends most of his energy in hiding himself from himself, with neurotic illness often the result. This motive of freeing man, of strengthening his will and reason, was a very powerful one in Freud, and it ought to be considered somewhat more closely now.

From the very beginning of his work Freud's "ideology" was that of a seeker for greater and greater strength for man.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253, 254.

# Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis\*

## I. PHILOSOPHICAL CONFLICT

WITTGENSTEIN once said that he 'holds no opinions in philosophy' and, again that he tries to remove 'a feeling of puzzlement, to cure a sort of mental cramp'. This emphasizes much more what evil philosophy removes than what good it brings. Nevertheless, all who have felt the old philosophical puzzles know the cramp Wittgenstein refers to. Indeed if one thinks of a philosopher one thinks of a man who talks like this, for example: 'We fancy we sometimes know what other creatures are thinking and how they are feeling. But all we really know is how they nod and smile at this, bark and frown at that. No reasoning from such information will justify a conclusion about how they think and feel; it won't even tell us that they think and feel at all, much less will it tell us what goes on in the souls behind their faces. True we can infer from the faces of clocks what goes on within. But that is different. For some of us have sometimes noted a clock's face and quickly looked within. None of us has ever noted a friend's face and then quickly looked within. Maybe we have looked within his body and found a decayed tooth or other sand in the transmission. But not in the happiest days have we ever viewed the landscapes he alone can view. And yet though it seems we can't know how others think and feel surely we often do know'.

The trouble spreads. The philosopher soon finds himself saying: 'Not only do I not know how or whether anything else thinks or feels but also I cannot really know what is happening in any place hidden from me, in the inside of a clock, for example, or beyond the horizon. I can open some clocks quickly but none quickly enough. On Tuesday at 2 p.m., I know only what is happening near me, within the walls of my room, in my own little ark. For what is happening far away on

\* From *Philosophy and Psycho-analysis*, by John Wisdom. Polemics Nos. 4 and 5, pp. 169-181. Reprinted by permission of Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., Oxford.

*the waste of waters or in the roaring Strand, I am obliged to rely on doves and telephones. However fast I hurry to the place I'm always late. The dove brings a leaf perhaps, but by the time I reach the distant Spring the leaves are turning or it's full Summer. For, if not, it wasn't Spring but still Winter when I started. Finding fallen leaves in November I may say I was right when in April, in Germany, I thought it was Spring in England. But the fallen leaves are not the Spring of which I dreamed in April. That is now for ever in the past. Even that I don't really know, obliged as I am to rely for all knowledge of the past upon dead leaves, bones, stones, documents and the faded photos in the family album and my memory. Nor do I know the future. For even if I knew what had happened this wouldn't guarantee what will happen.*

*'And now if I know nothing of the past and nothing of the future then all I seem to see and hear may have no more substance than a dream. For just as a phoenix is not a phoenix unless it renews itself in its own ashes so bread that comes down from Heaven isn't bread but manna, and a dagger that vanishes is not a dagger but an image.*

*'Further, even if I knew the future and could with perfect propriety predict to all eternity the pattern of my sensations, would this give substance to the shadows in a mirror that mirrors nothing?*

*'And yet, surely, I do know these things it seems I can't know? I do know that where there's smoke there's fire, that the stone I kick is real, that the friend who speaks with me is not a talking doll.'*

So spreads and swings the philosophic hesitation. Driven by a caricature of curiosity which is kept for ever hungry by an inexorable desire to be logically perfect and factually infallible the philosopher diminishes his claims to knowledge; agnosticism about the minds of others becomes agnosticism about all things but his own thought as he thinks it—in other words Solipsism. And Solipsism soon becomes Scepticism, the 'claim' that we know nothing. For when the philosopher become Solipsist fancies himself about to reap the reward of his logical purity in perfect knowledge, limited indeed but invulnerable, just then the statement he had hoped to make dwindles to the senseless whimper of an elderly infant in the mansions of the dead.<sup>1</sup> I don't mean, of course, that all philosophers in the end become Sceptics and find peace in death. On the contrary, no philosopher becomes really a Sceptic; because if a man really feels what the Sceptic says he feels then he is said to have 'a sense of unreality' and is removed to a home. In fact the sceptical philosopher never succeeds in killing his primitive credulities which, as Hume says, reassert themselves the moment he takes up the affairs of life and ceases to murmur the incantations which generate his philosophic doubt. More

<sup>1</sup> With apologies to Paul Nash. For fuller treatment see *Other Minds*, VII, John Wisdom.

than that, most philosophers refuse to be Sceptics even in their philosophic moments; these travellers on the road to Nothing mostly look back and would return whence they have come, but cannot. In this sad case, some talk of trans-sensual spheres glimpsed by a trans-sensual awareness, an apprehension of Reality mediated by, but not limited to, the sights and sounds, the headaches and the heartaches to which we seem confined; others, the Realists, pretend that nothing's happened, that everything's all right, that fine-spun argument can never shake the common sense they had and hold; others, the Phenomenalists, say that everything's all right because the ideal of knowledge of reality beyond appearance is only unattainable because it's unintelligible; others hurry agitatedly from one cult to another; others stand poised '*betwixt a world destroyed and world restored*', paralysed in the cramp of conflict.

We have come upon these people before—in other difficulties; indeed they are ourselves. And none of them is at ease. This comes out plainly in those who say they are not. But even those who have erected a temple for tranquillity have often a hidden fear of its falling about their ears. The Transcendentalist must constantly defend himself against the Sceptic and even against the Realist, who are the more menacing because they are not only outside him but also within. The realist must keep forgetting the philosophic qualms which though crammed down into Tartarus are not dead—the confidence he professes is never what it was before he ate of the forbidden tree. The phenomenalist protests too much that there was no baby in the bath water he threw away. None of them is easy—or if he is, he shouldn't be. This last qualification reminds us of the incompleteness in the description of the proper philosopher as one who tries to cure uneasiness. He may set himself to disturb complacency. So may a psycho-analyst. We may recognize this without forgetting how much philosophy and analytic work by patient and analyst is conflict and the cure of it.

## II. PHILOSOPHICAL AND OBSESSIONAL DOUBT

I have used words with a clinical flavour in the sketch of philosophers which I have just given because I want to bring out likenesses, connections, between states of philosophical stress and other states of stress arising from internal sources as opposed to states of stress arising from external sources. A general or a business man who has to decide what to do in a complicated situation may go over the many relevant considerations carefully and may do so many times. A judge considers carefully, even anxiously, the arguments of contending counsel. But the general, the business man and the judge may consider their problems very patiently and still be very different from the neurotic. The neurotic may discuss

his problems—he may indeed—but he never means business; the discussion is not a means to action, to something other than itself; on the contrary, after a while we get the impression that in spite of his evident unhappiness and desire to come from hesitation to decision he also desires the discussion never to end and dreads its ending. Have you not quite often had this impression with philosophers?—philosophers other than ourselves, for we, of course, are never neurotic. I once discussed with a man in a mental hospital whether he should continue to starve himself and study the Scriptures or take more nourishment and lend a hand at home. He put the matter well and with an admirable impartiality, but some months later I learned that he had died in the hospital, still, I believe, unable to settle the issue. And we have all read of the man who cannot be sure that he has turned off the tap or the light. He must go again to make sure, and then perhaps he must go again because though he knows the light's turned off he yet can't *feel* sure. He is obsessed by a chronic doubt. Has he done what he ought about the light or the tap? Perhaps his doubt is less limited, perhaps he is constantly questioning himself as to whether he has done what he ought. Such a man will often want rules of life to save him from continual conflict. Or again, his doubt may be less a matter of whether he has done this or that, or what he ought, and more a doubt as to what is happening where he can't see. He has slammed his front door, he hasn't much time to catch his train, but still he turns back because he wants to feel perfectly sure that things are all right behind the door—to which fortunately he has a key. At least he has a key until, like a philosopher, he wishes to see behind the door without opening it. Instantly it becomes '*a veil past which I cannot see*' and in the darkness of the cave one cannot tell whether She smiles or frowns. If we are watching shadows on a wall and want to know whether the shadows are telling the truth about what is going on behind our backs we can turn our heads and look; we aren't like an infant who, helpless in his cradle, cannot turn his head and cries when his mother goes out of sight; nor like philosophers who perpetually feel they don't know what's going on behind their backs, and who, still like the child, dread to know, cling to their ignorance. God or the gods know what really is so, what goes on among 'objective realities', but we know only what goes on among our own toys, copies of real things. The gods know but they never tell us anything, as James Forsyte continually complained when age now instead of youth confined him to his bed. The gods know but they tell us nothing—a conspiracy of silence among the arch-deceivers.

Yesterday a man just beginning philosophy told me that he had said to a friend: '*Some philosophers don't believe in material things and I am now*

*not sure that I do.*' His friend said, taking hold of the table, *'You don't believe there's a table here? You're mad.'*

I said *'Your friend's right. There is something very odd about the situation when a philosopher says "I don't believe there's a table here" or "I doubt whether there's a table here." It's not that his question is odd, I mean it's not simply his uttering these words "I'm not sure whether there's a table here" which strikes us as odd. If when you are seeking water in the desert someone gazes at what looks like water in the distance and says "I doubt whether there's really water there", you don't think him absurd. But the philosopher says "I am not sure" while he's drinking the water; he says it when no one would, or when no one but a madman would, or when no one but a madman or a philosopher would. And then also he is queer in that he doesn't act, doesn't feel, doesn't anticipate the future in the way his words suggest. In this he is at once more and less queer than a madman. The madman says, perhaps, "I shouldn't open that door" and his eyes widen in almost furious terror. You say "Why not?" and continue to walk towards the door. He clutches your arm and says, softly, "There's a tiger in there." You say "Nonsense, I've only just been in the room. You don't suppose a furniture firm has just driven up outside, erected a ladder, and slipped a tiger in through the window, do you? "Ah!" the madman says, "He hides" or "You can't see him".'*

This is the psychotic and he is different from the neurotic who says that he must make sure that he hasn't left the lights on but that, of course, it's all nonsense and that he really knows he has turned them off, or that he must make quite sure that his hands are quite clean although it is true he has only just washed them. The neurotic, we might say, doesn't believe what he says. Still he does go back at the risk of losing his train to make sure that the lights are off. The philosopher doesn't. His acts and feelings are even less in accordance with his words than are the acts and feelings of the neurotic. He, even more than the neurotic and much more than the psychotic, doesn't believe what he says, doesn't doubt when he says he's not sure. (Compare wishes when he says he doesn't, i.e. unconsciously wishes.) But if we say that the philosopher doesn't believe what he says, that he's only pretending to doubt, then we must remember that he's very different from someone who, wishing to deceive us, pretends. The philosopher isn't one who merely makes it seem to others that he is in doubt; he also seems to himself to doubt. In other words, although many of his acts and feelings are unsuitable to his words, some are suitable and, in particular, as he speaks he has much of the feeling characteristic of doubt. When he says *'Perhaps it's all in my mind'*, he feels something of the relief or disappointment of one who fearing this, hoping that, says *'Maybe it's all a dream'*.

But now what is it that makes philosophers go on in the way they do?

### III. THE PHILOSOPHER IS DIFFERENT

There is a big difference between the philosopher and both the psychotic and the obsessional neurotic. It lies in the flow of justificatory talk, of rationalization, which the philosopher produces when asked why he takes the extraordinary line he does. It is true that both the psychotic and neurotic listen to reason and defend themselves. The philosopher defends himself more elaborately. But this is not the point. The point is, aren't his rationalizations reasons?

When we call justifying talk 'rationalization' we hint that we are not impressed by it and do not expect others to be. But we are impressed by the philosopher's talk, it has a universal effect, reluctantly we are impressed by it. The trouble is that it doesn't impress us quite enough to make us satisfied with his conclusions while yet it impresses us; the reasons seem not quite good enough and not quite bad enough and—connected fact—it seems the same with the reasons for opposing conclusions. At the same time the position is not what it is in science or crime where some evidence lends probability to one hypothesis and other evidence lends probability to another and we may contentedly wait for more evidence to tip the scales. For the philosopher's proofs profess to be *proofs* or nothing. And yet, too, we cannot, as in mathematics or logic, bring the conflict to an end by finding the slip in one of the calculations which purport to demonstrate the conflicting conclusions. There's something queer about philosophical reasons and the reasoning goes on too long.

### IV. FIRST AS TO THE QUEERNESS OF PHILOSOPHICAL REASONS AND CONFLICT

Contrast a logical conflict. Lately it was reported in the Press that a railway official upon being asked the cause of a recent run of accidents replied, *'Well, the men are tired, the rolling stock a little the worse for wear, but it's not so much that as the working out of the law of averages'*. This explanation is based on the logical doctrine that the longer a die has been thrown without a six the more probable is a six on the next throw, and we may imagine someone who argues for this as follows: when a die is about to be thrown 100 times the probability of at least one six being thrown is very great, namely .999999988 approximately. It may happen, however, that no six has appeared in the first 25 throws. In such a case unless a six appears in the next 75 throws there will have been 100 throws without a six and this, as we have seen, is improbable to the degree .000000012. Therefore it is improbable to the degree .000000012 that no six will appear in the next 75 throws. Again, if it should happen that no six appears in the first 99 throws then unless a six appears in

the next throw there will have been 100 throws without a six and this is improbable to the degree .000000012. Therefore it is then improbable to the degree .000000012 that there will not be a six on the next throw while before the throws started this was not improbable but probable to the degree  $5/6$ .

This reasoning may temporarily impress us but we soon reply: The probability of a six after a long run of anything but sixes is still one in six if we assume that the die is not loaded, while if we do not assume this the probability of a six, so far from having increased as you suggest, has decreased, for the long run of throws without a six suggests that there is something about the die which prevents its falling six uppermost. Your reasoning in favour of the increasing probability of a six is tempting but it's fallacious. When you say '*It may happen that no six has appeared in the first 25 throws—in such a case, unless a six appears in the next 75 throws there will have been 100 throws without a six and this, as we have seen, is improbable to the degree .000000012*'—do you mean that we have seen that given only that a die is about to be thrown 100 times then it is improbable to a degree .000000012 that there will be no sixes? or do you mean that we have seen that given that a die has been thrown 25 times without a six and that it will be thrown another 75 times, then it is improbable to a degree .000000012 that at the end there will have been no six thrown? The former is true, the latter is false. For given that a die has been thrown 25 times without a six and that it will be thrown another 75 times, the improbability that at the end of the 100 throws no six will have been thrown is the improbability of throwing a six in the next 75 throws, that is  $1 - (\frac{5}{6})^{75}$ .<sup>1</sup> And when 99 throws have been made and another is about to be made, the improbability of this series of 100 throws not including a six, is the improbability of not throwing a six in the next throw, that is  $5/6$ .

Here the difficulty is cleared up; one proof is definitely mistaken and the mistake is found; the other proof is sound and the matter is settled. So much for the Monte Carlo fallacy.

It may seem a pity that philosophy cannot be conducted on these lines. But it cannot. A philosophical conflict is like a logical or arithmetical conflict. But it's different too. The peculiarity of philosophical conflicts has only lately been grasped. Philosophical theories such as '*Matter (or Mind) does not exist*' are neither theories nor theorems; they are what they sound like—paradoxes; and philosophical questions are not questions

<sup>1</sup> Neglecting the fact the 25 throws without a six suggest slightly that the die is loaded. This, negligible in a small number of throws, is not negligible in a large number of throws. It is this, I think, and not the explanation offered in Keynes's *Probability*, p. 316, which is the main source of the Petersburg Paradox.



(scientific) nor problems (logic)—but are more like riddles such as ‘*Can one man do what another does? Surely he can. And yet surely it can’t be that he can. For suppose A scratches his head. Then if B scratches his head he doesn’t do what A does since it’s not B’s head but A’s that A scratches. But if B scratches A’s head then again he doesn’t do what A does since A scratches his own head and B scratches someone else’s*’. But here drinks are served all round. For now nobody cares whether we say ‘*No man can do what another man does*’, or say ‘*If a man, A, scratches his head and a man, B, also scratches his, B’s, head then each does what the other does*’, or say ‘*If a man, A, scratches his head and a man, B, also scratches A’s head then each does what the other does*’. And now that nobody cares, the original paradox ‘*No man can do what another does*’ cannot be mistaken for a theory about human powers like ‘*No man can play billiards like Lindrum*’. And, what is more, now that everybody understands, now that everybody has explained his reasons, the doctrine ‘*No man can do what another does*’ can no longer be mistaken for a theorem like ‘*No man can draw isosceles triangles with the angles at the base unequal*’. In fact the paradox now appears as a paradox though in doing so it ceases to be one. For it now appears that one who says ‘*No man can do what another does*’ cuts a caper and encourages us to do likewise, not pointlessly but in order to reveal a concealed curiosity, namely that one man does what another does only when he does something different. One who says ‘*No man can do what another does*’ introduces a new logic to show up a hidden feature of the old, uses language oddly in order to show up an oddity in our usual use. And one who says ‘*No man can know the mind of another as he does his own*’ or ‘*No one can really know the mind of another*’ does the same sort of thing. His statement doesn’t come out of experience in the way ‘*No one can know what a Red man feels*’ comes out of experience; and it doesn’t come out of ordinary language in the way ‘*No one can know what a good poker player is thinking*’ or ‘*No one can marry his widow’s sister*’ does. It is not a statement of fact nor of logic. It comes out of language and out of experience—but in its own way—like ‘*Tyger, tyger! burning bright*’. It comes from extraordinary experience of the ordinary calling for extraordinary use of ordinary language. And to burst this way the bonds of habitual modes of projection is no more extraordinary than a caricature, or a picture that is not a photograph.

The consequence is that paradoxes are not established by experiment and statistics and cannot be proved by conclusive-deductive reasoning. They can be supported by inconclusive-deductive reasoning. The reasoning cannot be conclusive for, if it were, then the opposite of the paradox could not also be supported, and if its opposite could not be supported it would not be a paradox. And the reasoning will not be effective unless it leads to or comes from a new apprehension of the

familiar—without that it will be dead words, for after all tigers don't burn even in forests at night.

A paradox is a flag which declares a discovery—not a new continent nor a cure for pneumonia but a discovery in the familiar—but often it is also the Blue Peter of a new voyage. For often we don't properly understand a paradox until, beginning by regarding it literally, we have noted objections to it and held to it because of the reasons for it, and again noted objections and again held to it, and have come by this route to a state where we are no longer driven to assert it or to deny it. There's no short cut to this; for if *before* treating a paradox and its denial as incompatible and arguing for a win we say '*No doubt there's much in both*' this leaves us entirely vague as to what is in either. No—the journey to the new freedom is mostly long and arduous, the work of bringing to light and setting in order with respect to one another what drives us to accept, and what forces us to deny, a paradox, what makes it so fascinating, so attractive and so repugnant, may fairly take a long time. But it can take too long.

## V. PHILOSOPHICAL DISPUTE CAN GO ON TOO LONG

It may fairly take a woman a long time to decide which of two men is the right one for her to marry and it may take a man a long time to decide which of two professions is the right one for him to take up. But again in each case it may take too long. At first as we review with our friend the many considerations that bear on the issue we accompany him with interest, later with patience, but at last with irritation. For in time we feel that the difficulty is no longer a matter of coming to know his own mind, but of making up his mind. He still represents himself as ignorant of what would suit him and in this way conceals his incapacity to choose. '*Win or a place, win or a place*' shout those who quote the possible investments, but still he hesitates. And why can't he decide? Not merely because the considerations are so balanced. There's often nothing to choose on looks, form, breeding and price between one horse and another but this doesn't prevent people deciding before the flags go down which one to back. No, his chronic indecision, whether it takes the form of enthusiastic oscillation or melancholy inactivity, is due to the fact that besides the reasons revealed in the course of talking the matter over there are others which remain hidden. Family disputes are often very interminable and often have an unpleasant sweetness because they are conducted wholly in terms of what is 'right' or 'reasonable' while each disputant knows that forces quite other than those mentioned are at work and often knows the other knows. It is not that the things mentioned, the things brought up in the discussion, are not at work but that other

things unmentioned and unmentionable are also at work and being unmentioned do not work themselves out, so the disputes get their character—unpleasantly sweet and interminable.

The man I mentioned earlier who died in hospital discussing with himself an issue between altruism and the development of the true self, analysed himself in vain. Had he overweighted this? Had he neglected that? We struggle to pass from conflict into harmony, to find, as Aristotle said, the proper point between opposites. But unlike Aristotle we cannot face the prospect of choices without end and feel we must have rules to live by. To represent a difficult choice as ignorance of our duty in the situation we are in enables us to escape from facing the hidden sources of our hesitation. How much more can we escape into the wider inquiries of what acts, in general, are right and what, in general, makes good things good. Here we may wander for ever and when darkness begins to fall still build an altar to an unknown god.

When earlier I introduced the Monte Carlo fallacy I did so because I thought of it as one which arises purely from linguistic sources, as one which can be removed by turning the light on to linguistic confusion. And it is true that this trouble is more completely curable by linguistic treatment than are more philosophical troubles where the relevant facts of language form such a labyrinth that pressed in one quarter one may always take cover in another. But now it strikes me how very persistent and how very prevalent is even the simple Monte Carlo fallacy. One constantly hears people say '*Ah! that was too good to last*' or '*When we were having all the fine weather I thought we should have to pay for it*' or again, after a run of misadventures, '*Something will turn up. The luck must turn.*' Of course, to expect specially bad weather after specially good is not irrational if records show that regularly soon after specially good weather specially bad weather comes. But so far as I know there are no such records and so far as the people who use this argument know there are no such records. What they rely upon is '*the laws of chance working themselves out*'; what they rely upon is their feeling that though they don't know what card Fate will next deal them they do know what pack she holds so that if till now there have been no aces there'll be a lot of them soon to make up. True, there are people who when all has gone well for a long time feel more confident than ever; *they* feel that this just shows that Fate is with them. But there are others who begin to feel that they've had more than they deserve and that Fate will soon remind them that they are mortals, Polycrates and Amasis. And this last feeling finds expression, 'justification', rationalization, in talk about the laws of chance—confused talk because without the confusion it wouldn't express the way they feel. It's the same when things go badly; some fall into despair, others feel that they have

been punished enough and that even the most implacable Fate will now be prepared to 'give them a break'. So it appears how even this very purely logical paradox is not purely logical. It is true that the reasoning which leads to it, though fallacious, is plausible, it impresses us, and it does so partly because we have not a very firm and adequate understanding of the use of our linguistic tools in many discussions about probabilities; *but it does so also because the resulting paradox suits many people and suits something in most of us*. Gambling has a peculiar and half-secret fascination for many people; so also for many has the most theoretical talk about probability and chance. I submit that though the logical or linguistic explanation of the Monte Carlo fallacy is very adequate we would have a still more adequate explanation were we able to bring out not only the features of language that make for the committing of that fallacy but also other causes hidden beneath the flow of talk. And *if this is true of the Monte Carlo fallacy it is much more true of the philosophical paradoxes*.

Chance and Necessity, Freedom and Deity, Mind and Matter, Space and Time—these words have in them the detachment of the intellect but also echoes from the heart, and the fascination of them is not confined to professional philosophers. I remember how years ago one night in the 'Elephant' a gentleman who, it was plain, had already been there some time took me aside in order to explain to me something of the connection between Mind and Matter. The big words of metaphysics have an appeal which is wide and deep and old and we cannot fully understand and resolve the riddles they present without understanding that appeal. In this sketch of philosophers I have been hinting at this. I have been hinting at connections with what psycho-analysts try to bring into the light. True, philosophy has never been merely a psychogenic disorder nor is the new philosophical technique merely a therapy. There's a difference. Philosophers reason for and against their doctrines and in doing so show us not new things but old things anew. Nevertheless, having recognized how different is philosophy from therapy it is worth noticing the connections: (a) how philosophical discussion is the bringing out of latent opposing forces like arriving at a decision and not like learning what is behind a closed door or whether  $235 \times 6 = 1420$ ; (b) how, often, when the reasoning is done we find that besides the latent linguistic sources there are others non-linguistic and much more hidden which subtly co-operate with the features of language to produce philosophies; (c) how, in consequence, a purely linguistic treatment of philosophical conflicts is often inadequate; (d) how the non-linguistic sources are the same as those that trouble us elsewhere in our lives so that the riddles written on the veil of appearance are indeed riddles of the Sphinx.

MORRIS GINSBERG

## Psycho-Analysis and Ethics\*

THE CONTRIBUTION of Psycho-analysis to ethics may be considered from three points of view. We may enquire, in the first place, what light analytic theory throws on the natural history of morals, that is the ways in which moral rules and moral sentiments are formed and developed in the individual and the group. We may ask next whether Psycho-analysis can, from its own resources, provide the basis for an ethical theory or a set of standards or principles in the light of which existing moral codes can be criticized or evaluated. Finally, there is the question how far the insight into human nature acquired through the exploration of the unconscious elements in the human mind can help us in releasing the energies of man and removing the obstacles that hinder the realization of his ideals, whatever may be their ultimate source.

I propose to confine myself to the first and second of these questions. I do so not because I consider the third less important. On the contrary it may well be the most important. The reason for this self-imposed limitation is that a satisfactory treatment would necessitate a detailed study of case histories and should not properly be undertaken by anyone who, like myself, has no personal experience of analytic procedure. The problems raised in the first two questions are not always clearly distinguished by psycho-analytic writers and some would deny that there is such a thing as ethical theory other than the psychology of morals. Freud himself tells us that it is not the object of his investigations to provide an ethic, still less a *Weltanschauung*. Such activities, he says, may be left to philosophers who avowedly "find it impossible to make their journey through life without a Baedeker of that kind to tell them about every-

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thing.”<sup>1</sup> Professor Flugel, in his very thorough and searching examination of the ethical aspects of Psycho-analysis, distinguishes between questions of origin and questions of validity, and he is of the opinion that the problem of ultimate or intrinsic value is one for ethics and not psychology. Despite these disclaimers, however, the impression is conveyed, perhaps unwittingly, that a fuller knowledge of the psychology of motivation will render philosophic ethics unnecessary, and this despite the fact that assumptions are made about the nature of value judgments which certainly require philosophical justification. Thus Freud has no hesitation in asserting, despite his professed modesty in these matters, that value judgments are ultimately determined by desires and are in fact illusionary in character.<sup>2</sup> Similarly there are many passages in Professor Flugel’s book which suggest that he favours a “naturalistic” view of moral judgments, as, for example, when he argues that moral judgments are “orectic,” i.e., expressions of feelings, desires or wishes, and that reason is concerned with the means but not the ends of action. These are views which, of course, have a respectable philosophical tradition. I do not wish to prejudge the issue. But it is important to bear in mind that the problems thus raised are philosophical rather than psychological and that sooner or later they must be squarely faced as such.

Psychological theories of morals tend on the whole to be relativistic in outlook. For if moral judgments are considered to be expressions of desires or emotions there will be a tendency to stress the fact that they vary from one individual or group to another. From this the conclusion is readily drawn that they are not subject to rational tests, and, indeed, that the distinction between true and false does not properly apply to them. It is interesting to note, however, that recently several attempts have been made by psycho-analysts to move away from at least the more extreme forms of relativism. Thus Dr. Erich Fromm tries to show that it is possible on empirical grounds to distinguish between “genuine” and “fictitious” ideals—“a difference as fundamental as that between truth and falsehood,” and that the test is not subjective attractiveness but is to be found in the objective condition of mental life.<sup>3</sup> From another point of view, Dr. Money-Kyrle tries to escape relativism by a redefinition of the “normal” which he seeks to identify with the rational. In both these cases and in others the revulsion against relativism is to be traced to the impact of Nazism which made ethical relativism emotionally untenable. The question had to be faced whether it could really be the case that when Nazis say it is good and fitting to torture Jews and we say it is abominable

<sup>1</sup> *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Escape from Freedom*, p. 266.

the difference is one of personal taste only. The test of "adjustment to the environment" which would come naturally to a psycho-therapist clearly failed. As judged by this test, the Nazi could be as "good" as the democrat, so long as both were equally conditioned to fit into the environment favoured by their societies. Could it be that the real crime of the Nazis was their inefficiency, that is their failure to adopt the means likely to achieve the ends they set themselves? If this is rejected as morally repugnant, it would follow that moral judgments relate not merely to the means but also to the ends of action or else that the repudiation of the Nazi mode of life is emotional only and has no rational foundation. Questions of this sort troubled the minds of all who favoured ethical relativism. But they were felt with special acuteness by psycho-analysts, who realized that they had to re-examine their conception of what constitutes mental health, and that this could not be done without raising the problem of the validity of the criteria implicit in the ethical codes prevailing in different societies. The answers that have been given reveal a tacit reluctance to abandon ethical relativism combined with or qualified by a hope that objective or universal standards of the "normal" or the "healthy" can be derived from the data furnished by empirical psychology. In this respect the claims made by recent writers are bolder than anything to be found in Freud's work. With what success we have now to enquire.

## II

A striking feature of Freud's treatment of morals is his preoccupation with the sense of guilt. In this respect he differs markedly from the philosophers, who with the exception of Plato and Kant give little attention to moral evil. For analogy we have to go to the doctrine of original sin, and it is interesting to note that theologians have themselves noted the affinity between their doctrine and Freud's. The theme forms the centre of Freud's *Totem and Tabu* where morality is represented as a reaction-formation against the evil inherent in man. As is well known, he connects it with the early Œdipus situation in the primal horde, the incestuous desires of the band of brothers, the murder of the father, the subsequent remorse and identification with him. Social organization and moral restrictions are all traced back to this sequence of events. The bond which holds the group together is complicity in a common crime; religion is rooted in the sense of guilt and the consequent remorse; and morality is "based partly on the necessities of society, and partly on the expiation which this sense of guilt demands."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. 238.

Freud's reconstruction of primeval society was based on the views of Atkinson and Lang and on Robertson Smith's interpretation of the totem feast, and as it is not now accepted by anthropologists, the matter need not here be pursued further. Freud, however, never abandoned it, as is evident from one of his latest writings.<sup>1</sup> It retains its importance, I think, for two reasons. Firstly, it is taken by Freud as providing an explanation of "ambivalence," that is the coincidence of love and hate towards the same object, a concept essential to psycho-analytic theory. Secondly, it survives in Freud's deep-rooted belief in the existence of an inherited sense of guilt, transmitted in some way not further explained, through racial heredity. If this is taken seriously, it would involve the assumption of a group-mind, or a psyche of the mass as Freud calls it, in which mental processes occur analogous to those that occur in the mind of the individual, or else the possibility of the inheritance of acquired characters.

In the later writings the account that is given of the sense of guilt is not necessarily connected with these biological or anthropological theories and is compatible with the assumption that the individual starts his life as neither moral nor immoral but as amoral. The child acquires his morality from his environment. The formation of the "conscience" consists essentially in a process whereby the external authority of the father or of father-substitutes is transformed into an inner authority. It is described both by Freud and by his followers in terms of the distinctions they draw between the id, the ego and the super-ego. Throughout, emphasis is laid on the negative or repressive aspects of morality, the "Thou shalt not" of the moral codes. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that in therapeutic treatment analysts are struck with the great severity of the conscience, often resulting in cruel self-humiliation and self-torture. To account for this, appeal is made to the part played by the aggressive tendencies in the formation of the super-ego. In incorporating the authority of the father into his own self the child also incorporates the aggression imputed to the father as the source of frustration, and, at the same time, the child turns the aggression which he feels toward the father, but which he has to repress, against himself. The conscience thus contains a double dose of aggression, the aggression of the father and that towards the father. To this redoubled aggression is attributed the rigour and severity of the conscience, often going beyond the actual severity of the father; it explains the fact that the individual can be harsher towards himself than his parents ever were. The tensions of the conscience are, on this view, due not merely to the discomfort of resisting the pressure of habits inculcated by the group, but result from the fact that every time

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<sup>1</sup> *Moses and Monotheism.*



we refrain from meeting frustration by aggression, the aggression is turned against ourselves. The tension is felt as the sense of guilt, in essentials the result of a struggle between the ego and the super-ego. It may be noted in passing that one of the functions of religion is to relieve this tension by the promise of salvation and inward peace.

Freud repudiates the charge frequently made against him that he ignores the more positive aspects of the moral life.

It is no part of our intention [he says] to deny the nobility of human nature, nor have we ever done anything to disparage its value. On the contrary, I show you not only the evil wishes which are censored, but also the censorship which suppresses them and makes them unrecognizable. We dwell upon the evil in human beings with the greater emphasis only because others deny it, thereby making the mental life of mankind not indeed better, but incomprehensible. If we give up the one-sided ethical valuation then we are surer to find the truer formula for the relation of evil to good in human nature.<sup>1</sup>

It remains that the side of the moral life which is concerned with what is positively worth while receives scanty treatment. What there is, is couched in terms of the theory of sublimation, and the formation of the ego-ideal. Sublimation seems to be closely related to the process of identification, though in some of the later essays there are suggestions that it might be due also to the independent work of the ego, among whose functions is included that of introducing unity and harmony into the mental life. On the whole, however, what Freud has to say about the nature of ideals is brought within the framework of the theory of the libido. The love of ideals is in fact reduced to self-love or "narcissism." A portion of the libido is directed to ourselves, but some of it goes to ourselves not as we are but as we should like to be, in other words, to our ego-ideal. Now the ego-ideal is built up by identification with the father or father-substitute, and in the course of identification these are idealized, and we ascribe to them qualities which would make them worthy of our love. The root of the idealization, however, is narcissism or self-love. "The object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego-ideal of our own. We love it on account of the perfection which we have striven to search for in our own ego and which we should now like to procure in this roundabout way, as a means of satisfying our narcissism."<sup>2</sup> It will be seen that this leaves the problem of the root of idealism unresolved, since nothing further is said of the reasons which make us seek our own perfection. Furthermore, I find it difficult to believe that the love of ideals can be reduced to self-love. Why should there not be other things and

<sup>1</sup> *Introductory Lectures to Psycho-Analysis*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Group Psychology and the Psychology of the Ego*, p. 74.

qualities which are loved directly and for their own sake and not as parts of the self? Behind this assumption there seems to be a lingering attachment to the theory of psychological hedonism, the theory that desire is always for pleasure to the subject or self.

The value of the psycho-analytic contribution to the natural history of morals does not, I think, depend upon whether or not these particular theories will prove acceptable. It is to be found to a far greater extent in the wealth of material which analytic experience has brought to light, showing the enormous part played by unconscious factors in the formation of the moral sentiments. No doubt the fact that in the censure which we direct against ourselves and against others, repressed impulses and desires find an outlet, has long been known.<sup>1</sup> Again self-deception and sophistication are processes which have been frequently described by novelists, and to some extent by moral psychologists, long before the days of Psycho-analysis. But no one has shown so clearly as the analysts how infinitely varied are the distortions to which the conscience is subject, or disclosed in greater detail the extent to which the processes may be concealed from the agent himself. Psycho-analysis has further thrown a flood of light on the fact that the knowledge of good is so frequently dissociated from the will to good, the fact so vividly described by St. Paul: "That which I do I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate that I do . . . the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do."<sup>2</sup> Psycho-analysis can perhaps also help to explain the very remarkable variations in the emotional depth of the response to different types of offence against the moral code. The intensity with which we condemn "unnatural" lust, fraud, treachery, pride, cruelty, does not seem to be at all closely related to the degree of evil which the reflective conscience would find in each of these vices. Traditional moral psychology seems to have paid little attention to problems of this sort.<sup>3</sup>

The central weakness of Freudian moral psychology lies, I think, in its failure to deal adequately with the nature of moral obligation, and this in turn is due to the obscurity which surrounds the treatment of the relation between the cognitive and emotional components of the conscience. Obligation, it seems, consists in submission to authority, whether

<sup>1</sup> Professor Laird quotes in this connexion the following passages from *King Lear*: "Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? . . ."

"Thou rascally beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind

For which thou whipp'st her . . ."

*A Study in Moral Theory*, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Romans vii, 15-19.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, p. 194.

internal or external. The emotional basis is in either case fear, that is fear of punishment or of losing the love of those around us, or of our aggression towards those whom we love. The attitude towards ourselves when the moral sanctions have been internalized retains all the characteristics it had when the authority was external. Nothing is said of the possibility in the advanced levels of moral development of self-imposed rules, or of respect for principles of conduct rationally accepted as binding. The conscience, I would suggest, is a system of emotional dispositions or "sentiments," or rather a cluster of such sentiments of varying degrees of unity, which have gathered round our beliefs or judgments concerning right and wrong. The emotional components and the rational level of the judgments vary greatly in the different clusters or systems. There is not in fact one conscience, but an indefinite plurality of consciences, each with its own degree of emotional intensity and intellectual grasp. A man may be highly "conscientious" in his commercial dealings, but not in controlling his appetites; another may have rigid standards of sexual morality but very flexible ones in matters of business relations or professional morality. "I ought" may mean to one "my social circle expects this of me"; to another "God expects it of me"; to yet another "I expect it of myself." The degree of "internalization of authority" may differ widely from case to case in the same person and in different persons. The extent to which this internalization occurs can easily be exaggerated. For many individuals even in advanced societies a great deal of morality remains prudential and conventional. People like to believe that their conscience is their own, but in this they are easily deceived. Nevertheless the whole of morality is not "borrowed" morality. In morals as in other matters people do not live by taking in each others' washing. At some point we have to assume direct value judgments which are slowly clarified by experience and reflection. On this psycho-analytic theory seems to have very little to say.

Furthermore, the account given of the way in which the individual moves from a stage in which authority is external to that in which it becomes an inward monitor, is I think, open to objection. The transition is said to be effected through identification with the father, whereby his authority is incorporated into the self. It seems to me, however, that this process of internalization and individualization owes at least as much to our experience with equals with whom we have to establish a *modus vivendi*. It is through such experience that people come to make their own rules, and these may often be at variance with the rules that have come to them from superior authority. Another important factor is contact between different groups which brings to light conflicting moral standards between which the individual has to choose. In this context the psycho-

analysts have tended to treat the family too much in isolation from the larger group, and this has led them to underestimate the part played by social factors in the moral life, and almost completely to ignore the forces, rational and other, making for change and development.

### III

We have now to deal with the question whether psychoanalytic theory can provide the basis for a rational ethic. The morality so far discussed is super-ego morality. Its basis is the authority of the father or father-substitute internalized. If all the rules of morals come to us from without as commands, is there any rational method for choosing between them? We have seen that Freud himself nowhere claims to have worked out a rational ethic, yet in various places in his writings he holds out hopes for such an enterprise. In general, he has great faith in the power of rational inquiry. He dismisses subjectivist or relativist views of knowledge as "intellectual nihilism."<sup>1</sup> Though our knowledge of nature is affected by the structure of the mind, this does not make knowledge necessarily subjective, since the structure of the mind itself can be scientifically investigated, and the errors arising out of subjective factors allowed for. The theory of Psycho-analysis, so often accused of exaggerating the strength of the nonrational elements in human nature, rests in fact on the assumption that these are subject to rational control. The function of analysis is to extend the area of conscious control by bringing what was unconscious into consciousness, to ensure, as we are told, that "where id was there shall ego be." The ultimate ideal is the "primacy of reason" and on the moral side, "the brotherhood of man and the reduction of suffering."<sup>2</sup> An ethic of this sort, it is suggested, requires another foundation than that of religion.<sup>3</sup> Only hints are given, however, where such a foundation is to be sought for. It is suggested, for example, that a scientific ethic might play a therapeutic rôle analogous to that which the physician plays in dealing with neuroses in the individual. The analyst frequently finds that he has to do battle with the individual's conscience, which is often excessively severe and makes demands which he cannot possibly fulfil and which threaten his happiness. What Freud calls the "cultural super-ego" as represented, for example, in the ethical injunctions of the higher religions, calls for similar therapy. They set up standards too high for human nature and are therefore easily defeated by those who take a more realistic view. Thus the command to love your neighbour as yourself is no defence against human aggressiveness. "Such a grandiose

<sup>1</sup> *New Introductory Lectures*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p. 215.

inflation of love only lowers its value and cannot remove the evil." It is not clear, however, by what principles such an examination of idealistic codes is to be guided. The analogy with individual therapy breaks down. In dealing with the individual, the analyst assumes a "normal" environment and considers behaviour as neurotic which is in conflict with it. No such standard is available for societies, since there exists no scientific, comparative study of the pathology of civilizations, and we therefore cannot tell what is normal and what pathological.

Despite the lack of comparative data Freud has ventured on a general statement of the rôle of repression in the history of culture. Our civilization, he argued already in his early papers, is in the main founded on the suppression of instincts.<sup>1</sup> The theme is developed more fully in his sombre essay on the *Malaise of Culture*.<sup>2</sup> Both the libidinal and the aggressive tendencies have to be repressed if civilization is to flourish. Sexual energy has to be diverted from its original object to make possible the formation of wider groups and to keep them together. This is one of the reasons for the rules and regulations by which all known societies seek to control the sexual relations of their members. Another reason is to be found in the fact that love is needed to control hate. The aggressive impulses which, in Freud's view, are an ineradicable and primary element in human nature, could destroy mankind if left to work themselves out. To control them, aim-inhibited sexual energy has had to be used. The process involves the building up of the super-ego by the aid of which aggression is turned inwards and prevented from expressing itself directly. Following this line of thought Freud might have said with Buddha that "hatred does not cease by hatred; by love alone is hate destroyed." Freud, however, does not share the hope held out by the spiritual religions of the ultimate triumph of love. Eros is pitted against Thanatos and the antagonism between them will in all probability never be overcome.

In urging that the growth of civilization depends on the control or repression of fundamental instinctive drives Freud is saying what, in their different ways, the moralists of all ages have said. From the point of view of ethical theory the important problem is whether it is possible to elicit from this teaching any principles for determining the limits of this inevitable repression or any standards for estimating the loss and gain involved. As regards "civilized" sexual morality his discussion in the early papers at least is tentative and inconclusive. It is possible, he allows, to maintain that the cultural gains derived from sexual restraint outweigh its manifestly injurious results. But he finds himself unable to balance gain and loss with any precision. And he ends by saying that as judged

<sup>1</sup> "Civilized" *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness*, 1908. *Collected Papers*, II.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, 1930. English translation, *Civilization and its Discontents*.

by individual happiness it is very doubtful whether the sacrifices demanded can be justified—so long, at least, as we are “still so insufficiently purged of hedonism as to include a certain degree of individual happiness among the aims of our cultural development.”<sup>1</sup> As regards the effect of sexual restraint on cultural activities, Freud’s conclusions are equally tentative. He does not, of course, claim to have undertaken any comparative study of moral codes from this point of view. But on the basis of his own personal impressions he believes that “the relation between possible sublimation and indispensable sexual activity naturally varies very much in different persons, and indeed with the various kinds of occupation.” He does not support the view that “sexual abstinence helps to shape energetic self-reliant men of action, or original thinkers, bold pioneers and reformers; far more often it produces ‘good’ weaklings who later become lost in the crowd that tend to follow painfully the initiative of strong characters.”<sup>2</sup> In the end it emerges that while Freud is convinced that the code of sexual morality in Western societies urgently needs to be reformed, he is not prepared as a physician to come forward with definite proposals. This was not to be expected. But the discussion throws light on the sort of ethical theory that Freud might have developed, had he chosen to pursue the matter further. It is clear that the ethical criteria to which he appeals in criticizing existing moral codes are individual happiness and cultural advance. Furthermore, he realizes that we have not the knowledge that would be necessary for any accurate application of these criteria, and he is obviously disturbed by the fact that gains in one direction are often countered by loss in the other.

In the later writings the problem thus raised reappears in another form. Freud finds that there is a certain antagonism between the growth of culture and the development of the individual. The antagonism results, in the first place, from the struggle between Eros and Thanatos. The aim of cultural development is the unification of all mankind. This can only be achieved by a repression of aggression. But every time we control our

<sup>1</sup> *Sexual Morality and Nervousness*, 1908. *Collected Papers*, II, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. J. D. Unwin has produced an elaborate argument to show that in primitive societies there is a definite relation between sexual continence and degree of cultural advance (*Sex and Culture*, 1934). But the criteria which he uses both for cultural condition and sexual regulation are very vague and the evidence he adduces is not to justify a generalization so far-reaching. (Cf. my review of this book in *Nature*, Vol. CXXXV, p. 205, 1935.) Westermarck, who made a very comprehensive survey of the available information, concludes that there is no relation between the toleration of unchastity and the degree of culture, and that on the contrary chastity is more respected in the lowest tribes than in the higher ones. In *The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples* (1915), L. T. Hobhouse, G. C. Wheeler and the present writer found that the evidence was not sufficient to establish a universal association between sexual regulation and cultural grade as judged by economic criteria.

aggression, it turns against the self. The result is an increasing tension between the ego and the super-ego which is felt as a sense of guilt. It seems to be assumed that the larger the group, the greater the difficulty of achieving libidinal unity and the greater the cost in human happiness. The progress of mankind can only be achieved at the expense of an intensification of the sense of guilt "until perhaps it may swell to a magnitude that individuals can hardly support."<sup>1</sup> No wonder that Freud thought the sense of guilt constituted the most important problem in the evolution of culture.

In the second place, there is, according to Freud, not only this irreconcilable conflict between the life and death instincts but a fissure within the libido itself, which from the ethical point of view is at least as important. The growth of the individual is shaped by the pleasure principle, that is by the desire of the individual for his own happiness. No doubt he can only attain this through membership in a community. But this condition is sometimes represented by Freud as a sort of unfortunate necessity, as something he would be better without. For culture, as we have seen, is necessarily restrictive of the individual; it demands instinctual renunciation. There is thus, as Freud says,<sup>2</sup> dissension in the camp of the libido itself, a struggle between the striving for happiness and the impulse towards union with others. Freud asserts that this contest will ultimately be resolved in the case of the individual and perhaps also in the future of civilization. But unfortunately the theme is not further developed.

The ethical theory that Freud's discussion suggests is one of enlightened self-interest, that is self-interest purged of unconscious distortions, fears and anxieties not rooted in the objective situation. What such self-interest would require can only emerge after therapeutic analysis both of the individuals and societies. But it is difficult to believe that psychology will ever by itself solve the fundamental problems of human relations, or in the Freudian terminology, the problem of the right apportionment of libidinal attachment as between self and other "objects." A theory of ethics which rests on the assumption that in dealing justly with others the individual can after all secure his own happiness has all the air of an "illusion" which, from the Freudian point of view, should be relegated to the infantile stages of the development of morality.

It is, I think, remarkable that while Freud and his followers have so much to say about love, they pay hardly any attention to justice. The only reference I can find is in Freud's *Group Psychology and the Psychology of the Ego*. "Social justice," we are told, "means that we deny ourselves

<sup>1</sup> *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136.

many things so that others may have to do without them as well, or what is the same thing, may not be able to ask for them." The demand for equality among the members of a group is said to be rooted in the jealousy aroused against those who would monopolize the love of the leader, just as their sense of community rests on their common renunciation of his exclusive love. This reduction of humanity and justice to envy and jealousy is somewhat mitigated by his interpretation of Eros as a force working for unity and harmony. But the two sides of his theory, ultimately due to the vagueness and ambiguity of the concept of the libido, are nowhere satisfactorily brought into relation, and on the whole the "egoistic" trend in his thought predominates. It is difficult to see how such a conception of human nature can ever provide the basis for a rational ethic.

The most important problems of ethics centre round the theory of justice and in dealing with it Psycho-analysis is, I think, at its weakest. I see no reason, from the purely psychological side, for accepting the Freudian view of the origins of the sense of justice. Neither in the history of the individual or of civilization can this be shown to be rooted predominantly in the desire that no one shall fare better than ourselves. It owes at least as much to the power of sympathy, that is the power of entering in imagination into the situation of another and seeing it as though it were our own. Above all there is a rational element in it which the Freudian analysis completely ignores. The core of justice is the demand for equality and this is based at bottom on the rejection of arbitrariness, the recognition that individuals ought not to be treated differently unless a reasonable ground can be given for so treating them. I can see no ground for regarding this demand as merely emotional. If I say that "one man's good is of as much intrinsic worth as the like good of another," I certainly do not mean that "the emotion which I experience in knowing that one man is benefited or injured is the same as that which I should experience in the case of any other." This latter statement would be manifestly untrue in many instances but the recognition of its falsity has no bearing on the truth or falsity of my recognition of the principle of equality as binding on me. The difficulties in the theory of equality begin to emerge when we try to think out the grounds which justify differential treatment. On these again psychology may throw some light, but in the end value judgments have to be made, which, though ineffectual if lacking in emotional warmth, do not depend for their validity on the strength of the emotional response.

In sum, the issue that psycho-analytic theories of ethics have to face is that with which all naturalistic ethics are confronted. The problem is whether moral judgments express desires, strivings or emotions, or whether



they go beyond what is actually desired to what *ought* to be desired. It seems to me that psycho-analysts suffer from what might be called an "ought phobia." They show too great an anxiety to explain the "ought" away, and they tend to pass from the indicative to the imperative mood without realizing the implications of the transition. Thus, for example, Professor Flugel in his very illuminating study of the psychological basis of morals is in search of an ethic purged of anger and aggression and one that would make its appeal to reason. Yet reason is, in his view, concerned with means and not with ends, which in the last resort are set by "orexis" or desire. The moral criterion which is finally adopted, however, clearly goes beyond what individuals actually desire to what they ought to desire, or, if you like, to what they would desire if they were rational. This criterion is the free and spontaneous expression of the instincts in so far as this is compatible with harmony not only in the individual but in society. Is this ideal then "orectic" or cognitive? Again when we are told that increasing sociality and increasing individualization are complementary aspects of moral evolution, is this a statement of fact or of what ought to be fact? We have seen that according to Freud the conflict between individual and social development is far from being resolved, and Professor Flugel also points out that the compromise which has to be effected between socialization and individualization remains one of the most acute problems of modern democracy.<sup>1</sup> To set up social harmony as an ideal is to describe a form of life held to be desirable, not one which in fact is necessarily desired. If the test is to be found in what people actually desire, the impulses making for discord may prove more powerful, or no less powerful, than those making for harmony. Despite a good deal that is attractive in Professor Flugel's exposition I feel that in the end he leaves undefined the relation between the striving and the cognitive elements in the moral judgment. He says that in a scientific handling of human relations "we must substitute a cognitive and psychological approach for an emotional and a moral one."<sup>2</sup> But this, I think, would be not to explain morality, but to explain it away.

#### IV

I turn now to the views of Erich Fromm, which in important respects involve a departure from Freudian theory. In the first place, his conception of human nature is not as individualistic, or asocial, as he takes Freud's to be. He has a different conception of both the love and hate elements in the human mind. Man is fundamentally social in that he needs to be related to others, to escape aloneness, to belong or to be

<sup>1</sup> *Man, Morals and Society*, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *Man, Morals and Society*, p. 255.

needed. Destructiveness on the other hand is the result of a baulking of vitality, not an inherent or primary need to hurt or destroy. In the second place, he distinguishes more radically than the Freudians between what he calls an "authoritarian" conscience and a "humanistic" conscience. The former is the voice of an internalized external authority, the super-ego of Freudian theory. The latter is not "the internalized voice of an authority we are eager to please and are afraid of displeasing; it is our own voice, present in every human being and independent of external rewards and sanctions."<sup>1</sup> It is the "expression of our true selves," "the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or disfunctioning." It bids us develop fully and harmoniously, that is "to realize ourselves, to become what we potentially are."

Here we are back full circle to theories long familiar to philosophers, but now claiming to be derived from empirical psychology. While there is a great deal that is very helpful in Fromm's analysis of the conditions of harmonious development, he does not seem to me to succeed any better than the Freudians in making the transition from what is or may be to what ought to be. To say that we should aim at becoming what we potentially are is not illuminating, since we are potentially evil as well as good and what we need is a criterion for distinguishing between them. The appeal to the "real" or "true" self is purely verbal, since the real self is not the self as it is but as it ought to be. Furthermore, the formula of self-realization leaves out of consideration the central problem of ethics—that of the relation between self and others. In the end, it is not any form of self-fulfilment that is desirable, but only that which is compatible with the fulfilment of others. Clearly such an end goes far beyond what any particular individuals actually desire, and it may require them to abandon or sacrifice a good deal of what they so desire. The philosophical problem of the principles of justice thus remains. It seems to me that writers like Fromm and Karen Horney are too optimistic in assuming that these can be discovered by "listening to ourselves." What we may thus hear may not be very enlightening. The conditions of social harmony have to be discovered; they will not follow automatically from the striving towards self-realization, even if each individual is "true to himself."

## V

An interesting approach to the ethical aspects of Psycho-analysis is to be found in the various attempts that have been made to clarify the concept of a "normal" mind. It soon becomes clear that from the point of

<sup>1</sup> *Man for Himself*, p. 158.

view of mental health the "normal" is not equivalent to the "well adjusted." Adjustment is a relation between the individual and his environment, and it is obvious that not every environment is equally likely to elicit what is best in the minds it moulds. The best adjusters, say, to a criminal environment are not necessarily the healthiest. If we value individuality and spontaneity we should have to regard the individual who conforms most fully to the pattern of a totalitarian society as unhealthy. The criterion of efficiency, in the sense of effective use of capacities, is equally unhelpful. A selfishly prudent person may be successful in achieving his own ends to the detriment of others. "Social efficiency" is again relative to the standards prevalent for the time being and, as judged by them, the finest and those most sensitive to new values would have to be called "abnormal."<sup>1</sup> Again in periods of rapid changes in the social structure the individual who shapes his conduct in accordance with standards developed in periods of greater stability may have to carry a burden too heavy for mental peace. In such circumstances the "well adjusted" person may well be the exception and not the rule.

Considerations such as these suggest that the normal and the abnormal cannot be fruitfully defined in terms of conformity with, or departure from, current standards.<sup>2</sup> From the point of view of psycho-analytic theory we have to consider not only the fact of deviation but its causal background. Dr. H. J. Wegrocki has suggested that the differentia of abnormality is to be found in "the tendency to choose a type of reaction which represents an escape from a conflict-producing situation instead of a facing of the problem."<sup>3</sup> This may serve well enough, I imagine, provided the notion of "escape" can be defined in a manner which would make it include all the symptoms that psychopathologists use in identifying neuroses. But in its broader applications the charge of "escapism" can easily be levelled against anything that we do not happen to approve. Those who think that radical social reforms can only be brought about by inward psychological changes will regard all those who put their faith in external institutional changes as "escapists," and conversely. Similarly the pacifist and his opponent may well accuse each other of running away from the facts and not "facing reality."

An important attempt to arrive at an objective standard of normality has been made by Dr. Ernest Jones in his paper on "The Concept of the

<sup>1</sup> "Nor must we overlook the fact that the greatest ethical reformers, prophets and heroes were certainly neurotics, and that ethics has been furthered by them" (Pfister, *Some Applications of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 229). It is not clear to me by what tests they are adjudged "neurotic."

<sup>2</sup> Except, of course, in dealing with gross pathological deviations.

<sup>3</sup> "A Critique of Cultural and Statistical Concepts of Abnormality," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 34, 1939.

Normal.”<sup>1</sup> In effect, if I have understood him rightly, he gives a psycho-analytic version of the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, with the analyst playing the part of the “phronimos.” If the individual could through analysis be purged of his unconscious fear, hate and guilt, his potentialities would have the chance of developing in due proportion. In his relations with others he would then show neither the excessive friendliness which may mask an unresolved sadism, nor the insensitiveness which may be a defence against a love of which he is afraid. He will thus avoid the kind of selfishness which is a form of “secondary narcissism” and the sort of self-sacrifice which is rooted in unconscious guilt. Having inner security, he will meet frustration and hostility calmly and fearlessly. Freed from unconscious guilt he will develop the capacity for happiness, that is a combination of the capacity for enjoyment with self-content. He will have the inner freedom which will result from the removal of undue repressions and the barriers that impede the flow of energy between the conscious and unconscious levels of the mind.

Clearly this describes an ideal rather than an existing state of affairs. To the question whether a normal mind thus defined exists, Dr. Jones replies “definitely in the negative.” He adds that we are only in the early stages of learning about the conditions in which the standard laid down can be attained. From the point of view of ethical theory the problem is whether Dr. Jones is describing what people actually desire or what in his view they ought to desire. On his own showing people are in fact torn between love and hate, between gratification and repression, between the super-ego actuated by guilt based on fear and the super-ego actuated by affection. To say that as a result of analysis the ethics of affection will be shown to be superior to the ethics of authority is to say that the former ought to prevail over the latter; it is a value judgment and not an assertion of psychological fact. Furthermore, we are told very little about the contents of an ethic of love. It is not to be taken for granted that love, even if “desexualized,” will suffice to solve the problems of human relations.<sup>2</sup> There will remain the difficulties of choice and the grading of values. We cannot and ought not to love everything in ourselves and in others indiscriminately. The principle of universal love, taken by itself, might easily lead to the position of philosophical anarchism, that

<sup>1</sup> *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol. XXIII, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, if you begin by putting all the virtues into love you can take them out again. Cf. St Augustine: Temperance is love keeping itself uncontaminated for its object; Fortitude is love readily enduring all for the beloved's sake; Justice is love serving only the beloved and therefore rightly governing; Prudence is love sagaciously choosing the things that help her and rejecting the things that hinder. *De Moribus*, I, 15, 25; 1841, translation of passage as given by Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics*, p. 132, 5th ed., 1925.

everyone should be allowed to do what he wills. If it is urged that to do so would result in the majority of people not getting what they want, we are brought back to the real task of social ethics which is to discover the principles of distributive justice and the limits with which constraint may rightly be used to ensure their being carried into effect. To this task psychology may contribute much of importance, but is hardly likely to have the last word.

Dr. Jones makes the interesting observation that "analysed people, including psycho-analysts, differ surprisingly little from unanalysed people in the use made of their intelligence. . . ." They show greater tolerance, he tells us, in sexual and religious matters, but in other spheres, e.g., in dealing with the relative merits of capitalism or communism or the problems of class structure or international relations, they continue to be extensively influenced by the distorting effects of unconscious complexes. He goes on to suggest that if the analytic technique were applied to the convictions men hold in relation to all these problems, we should gain knowledge that would aid us in the study of normality.<sup>1</sup>

This suggestion has been elaborated and carried further by Dr. Money-Kyrle, who by its aid arrives at a definition of the normal which identifies it with the rational.<sup>2</sup> A desire is rational according to Dr. Money-Kyrle if all the beliefs that influence it are true. Presumably the beliefs are true if they represent accurately the qualities of the objects desired, or the appropriateness of the means used to attain these objects. On the other hand, the desires themselves cannot be either true or false, rational or irrational. The chain of means and ends cannot of course go on indefinitely. There are, however, no ultimate or irreducible desires until we reach the most primitive desires of all, such as "the hedonic impulse to avoid painful and seek pleasurable experiences." This, of course, is the sort of theory that has long been familiar to philosophers in various forms. What psychoanalytic theory adds is to stress the part played by unconscious factors in influencing beliefs. A desire is rational if these have been brought to consciousness and accepted only if shown to be true.

The distinction drawn by Dr. Ernest Jones between a super-ego actuated by guilt based on fear and a super-ego actuated by affection reappears here in the form of a distinction between the "authoritarian" and the "humanistic" character. In the former moral behaviour is predominantly shaped by the fear of punishment; in the latter, by the fear of injuring or disappointing something that is loved. Moral behaviour is defined as behaviour dictated by a sense of guilt. But while in the authoritarian character the sense of guilt is based on what, following Dr. Melanie

<sup>1</sup> *loc. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Psycho-Analysis and Politics*, 1951.

Klein, Dr. Money-Kyrle calls the "persecutory position," in the humanitarian this gives place to the "depressive position," sorrow at having injured something loved. It is claimed that as a result of analysis a patient gets rid of his irrational fears and thus of his authoritarian morality. But as he gains increasing knowledge of himself he has an "emphatic understanding of his fellows and can neither injure nor neglect them without distress—or what is the same thing, without depressive guilt." It is not clear whether this new form of guilt is just a feeling of depression or a recognition of wrong, nor whether the whole of the "ego morality" is exhausted in the unwillingness of the agent to injure or neglect his fellows. Be this as it may, the conclusion is drawn that since the transformation is effected through increasing knowledge or insight, we may say that to be normal, to be rational and to be humanistic are one and the same thing. In this way, Dr. Money-Kyrle argues, ethics can be given a scientific basis and thus escape the relativism which, as he explains, he finds emotionally intolerable.

The weakness of this line of argument is revealed when we ask, why be rational or normal? The only answer that can be given, we are told, is that there is in us a desire for truth.<sup>1</sup> The question then arises as to the status of this desire. So far as I can see it is not one of the primitive or irreducible desires, since hedonically truth is far from being what we always want. But even if it were, it would be only one desire among others which conflict with it, and as between ultimate desires there is according to this view no rational way of deciding. We are thus left with a non-rational desire for rationality. It is not easy to see how this escapes relativism.

Dr. Money-Kyrle argues that it is possible on the evidence provided by Psycho-analysis to define the "good" state, and to decide rationally between the rival political theories now clamouring for our allegiance. The "good" state is, in short, the one that provides the most favourable opportunities for the development of the "normal" or "humanist" character in its citizens. If the non-humanist disagrees, we can show him that his beliefs are rooted in a character dominated by irrational anxieties within himself and that, if he submitted himself to analysis, he would be freed from their domination, his character would become more humanistic and his political views would be correspondingly transformed. I do not know whether this argument is purely hypothetical, or whether it has been empirically verified by actual analysis of representative samples of the different political parties. But in any case Dr. Money-Kyrle wins his battles too easily. A very complex inquiry would be needed

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

to determine to what extent political theories differ about the ends of social life or about the means. That Tories want freedom without welfare, Socialists welfare without freedom, and Communists neither freedom nor welfare are statements that each might make about the other, but hardly about themselves. Psycho-analysis can no doubt help in clarifying the ends of conduct relatively to the means needed to realize them. But I do not see how it can decide rationally which theories are "right" and which "wrong," if it starts from the assumption that the distinction between true and false does not apply to the ends of desire. All that can be said on this assumption is that some prefer one political theory and some another.<sup>1</sup> In this context the communists are on sounder ground when they urge, in agreement with many non-communist philosophers, that ends and means are dialectically interdependent and that in any evaluation they must be considered together. If so, we should be led to a different view of what constitutes rationality in action from that which seems to be favoured by psycho-analysts. We should in fact be searching for principles guiding desire and recognized as rightly guiding them. No doubt Psycho-analysis gives powerful support to the doctrine that force is no remedy and that repression takes its revenge by generating fresh conflicts. In doing so it is in harmony with certain aspects of liberal political theory. But liberal thought has long ago recognized also that liberty rests on restraint, a principle again supported by what Psycho-analysis has to teach us concerning the functions of repression in the development of the mind. The problem both in the case of the individual and of society is to determine the limits of coercion and the spheres within which it may be properly used. It is at this point that political theories diverge and I do not see why we should expect Psycho-analysis to clear away the formidable difficulties which these theories have to face.

## VI

It follows, I think, from the above survey that the attempts that have been made to derive an ethical theory from Psycho-analysis have not so far proved successful. Psycho-analysis, it seems to me, is not necessarily committed to any particular theory, and is compatible with very different theories of the logical character of moral judgments. Its business as a therapy is to break down the barriers between the unconscious and the conscious levels of the mind and in this way to expand the area of conscious control. But it is not to be assumed that when an individual has

<sup>1</sup> I think Bertrand Russell is more candid in dealing with a similar question. In an account he gives of an imaginary dialogue between Nietzsche and Buddha, he admits that in the end the issue cannot be decided by an appeal to facts, but only by an appeal to the emotions. (*A History of Western Philosophy*, pp. 799-800.)

become more fully aware of the impulses by which he has been influenced he will necessarily have discovered the right principles of conduct. That would only follow on the assumption of a natural moral sense which needs only to be freed from the obstructions to which it has been subjected to be enabled to see at once what is right and what is wrong in human relations. Psycho-analysts are of course as entitled as anyone else to subscribe to a naturalistic theory of morals, but I cannot see that such a theory derives special support from the teaching of Psycho-analysis.

The predilection shown by psycho-analytic writers for the view that moral judgments are "orectic," that is expressions of desire or striving, is, I think, traceable to two sources. Firstly psycho-analysts have never freed themselves from the doctrine of psychological hedonism, despite the criticisms directed against it by moral philosophers. They tend to interpret Freud's "pleasure principle" as implying that impulses have for their sole object the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. From psychological hedonism they pass in a manner familiar in the history of philosophy to ethical hedonism, in other words from the assertion that men seek pleasure or happiness to the assertion that happiness is their good. The appeal to the "real self" also lends itself to a species of naturalism amounting to the assertion that the good is what satisfies the self or what would satisfy it, if it knew its "true" nature.

In the second place, I suggest that the predilection for the view that moral judgments are rooted in desire or striving may be a sort of defensive reaction against the authoritarian element in morals. In their flight from the "ought" psycho-analysts overlook the distinction between moral obligation and self-coercion. This is encouraged by the fact that the moral law is often regarded as a sort of command. But strictly the relation of command-obedience is inter-personal, and it is only by analogy that it is extended to the self. A man cannot really "obey" himself or such an abstraction as a general principle. It is no doubt the case that moral judgments claim to possess authority, but this is only another way of saying that they claim to be true. It is psychologically convenient to speak of recalcitrant impulse struggling against reason or of conflicts between impulses. But all this has little bearing on the problem of the logical validity of moral judgments. Constraint and validity are not interchangeable terms.

On the empirical side Psycho-analysis can, I think, make important contributions to the study of morality mainly in two directions. It can help, in the first place, by building up what might be called a comparative moral pathology. It would be of the greatest interest to the moralist to know what moral changes are brought about by analysis in, say, a Muhammadan, a Buddhist, or a Communist living in their own setting.



The analysis of representatives of these creeds in other than their own environment is another matter, the issues being complicated by the influence on the individual of conflicting moral codes. Data of this sort would provide valuable material for the study of the causes making for variation in moral codes and they would facilitate the task of their critical evaluation.

In the second place, Psycho-analysis can contribute towards the clarification of moral experience by ridding it of the magical elements that have gathered around it and purging it of fear and anger. An example of what I have in mind is to be found in the persistent influence of the emotional demand for retribution on the criminal law and on the philosophical theories of the ethical basis of punishment. The movement in recent psycho-analytic writings towards a "humanist" ethics is clearly in this direction. But though an ethic based on love is vastly superior to one based on obedience, it will not suffice to solve the complex problems of human relations, even in small groups, and still less in the "great society." The demands of love generate conflicts of their own. There are fissures, as Freud saw, within the libido itself. To overcome them we need more than goodwill. Neither in theory nor in practice can love replace justice.





## *The Neo-Thomist Viewpoint*

ALTHOUGH THE philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) had long been an influential factor in the formation of Catholic thought, it was not until 1879, when Pope Leo XIII issued the now famous Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, that Thomism became established as the approved frame of reference for Catholic philosophical ventures.

Without reference to its affiliation with Catholicism, Thomism is a philosophy. Not all Catholics are Thomists; not all Thomists are Catholics. Basically, Thomism represents a sustained attempt to understand man and the world in which he finds himself. This attempt it has in common with other philosophical systems. That which is unique in Thomism is the stress it places upon existence, on the act of existing—not in the Existentialist sense of man as free, as “creating” himself—but on existence viewed as the basic act by which everything is a reality. This stress, however, does not place Thomism outside the class of philosophical systems: it simply gives it its characteristic mark. To the degree that the philosophy of St. Thomas was the outcome of the reflection of a theologian-philosopher, we can regard it as a Christian interpretation of the world, or as an attempt to understand empirical reality in the light of Christianity. But Thomas himself clearly distinguished between philosophy and theology; and Thomism subsequently has developed as a philosophy to stand or fall on the basis of its own intrinsic merits or defects—it makes its appeal to reason, not to faith or to revelation. The Neo-Thomists then, as the following selections will demonstrate, can and do enter the philosophical

arena and demand a hearing on the same philosophical level as thinkers who belong to quite different traditions and schools of thought.

### *SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING*

- CHESTERTON, G. K. *St. Thomas Aquinas*  
COPLESTON, F. *Aquinas*  
COPLESTON, F. *Contemporary Philosophy*  
D'ARCY, M. C. *Thomas Aquinas*  
GILSON, ÉTIENNE. *God and Philosophy*  
GILSON, ÉTIENNE. *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*  
GILSON, ÉTIENNE. *Elements of Christian Philosophy*  
MARITAIN, JACQUES. *The True Humanism*  
MARITAIN, JACQUES. *Scholasticism and Politics*  
MARITAIN, JACQUES. *Introduction to Philosophy*  
SERTILLANGES, A. D. *Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy*

# God and Contemporary Thought\*

THE PRESENT-DAY position of the problem of God is wholly dominated by the thought of Immanuel Kant and of Auguste Comte. Their doctrines are about as widely different as two philosophical doctrines can possibly be. Yet the Criticism of Kant and the Positivism of Comte have this in common, that in both doctrines the notion of knowledge is reduced to that of scientific knowledge, and the notion of scientific knowledge itself to the type of intelligibility provided by the physics of Newton. The verb "to know" then means to express observable relations between given facts in terms of mathematical relations.<sup>1</sup> Now, however we look at it, no given fact answers to our notion of God. Since God is not an object of empirical knowledge, we have no concept of him. Consequently God is no object of knowledge, and what we call natural theology is just idle talking.

If we compare it with the Kantian revolution, the Cartesian revolution hardly deserved such a name. From Thomas Aquinas to Descartes the distance is assuredly a long one. Yet, although extremely far from each other, they are on comparable lines of thought. Between Kant and them, the line has been broken. Coming after the Greeks, the Christian philosophers had asked themselves the question: How obtain from Greek metaphysics an answer to the problems raised by the Christian God? After centuries of patient work, one of them had at last found the answer, and that is why we find Thomas Aquinas constantly using the language

\* From *God and Philosophy*, by Étienne Gilson, pp. 109-144. Yale University Press. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>1</sup> For a general introduction to the criticism of metaphysics by Kant and Comte, see É. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York, Scribner, 1937), Part III, pp. 223-295.

of Aristotle in order to say Christian things. Coming after the Christian philosophers, Descartes, Leibniz, Malebranche, and Spinoza found themselves confronted with this new problem: How find a metaphysical justification for the world of seventeenth-century science? As scientists, Descartes and Leibniz had no metaphysics of their own. Just as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas had had to borrow their technique from the Greeks, Descartes and Leibniz had to borrow their technique from the Christian philosophers who had preceded them. Hence the vast number of scholastic expressions which we meet in the works of Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, and even Locke. All of them freely use the language of the Schoolmen in order to express nonscholastic views of a nonscholastic world. Yet all of them appear to us as seeking in a more or less traditional metaphysics the ultimate justification of the mechanical world of modern science. In short, and this is true of Newton himself, the supreme principle of the intelligibility of nature remains, for all of them, the Author of Nature, that is, God.<sup>2</sup>

With the Criticism of Kant and the Positivism of Comte, things become entirely different. Since God is not an object apprehended in the a priori forms of sensibility, space and time, he cannot be related to anything else by the category of causality. Hence, Kant concludes, God may well be a pure idea of reason, that is, a general principle of unification of our cognitions; he is not an object of cognition. Or we may have to posit his existence as required by the exigencies of practical reason; the existence of God then becomes a postulate, it is still not a cognition. In his own way, which was a much more radical one, Comte at once reached identically the same conclusion. Science, Comte says, has no use for the notion of cause. Scientists never ask themselves *why* things happen, but *how* they happen. Now as soon as you substitute the positivist's notion of relation for the metaphysical notion of cause, you at once lose all right to wonder *why* things are, and why they are what they are. To dismiss all such questions as irrelevant to the order of positive knowledge is, at the same time, to cut the very root of all speculation concerning the nature and existence of God.

It had taken Christian thinkers thirteen centuries to achieve a perfectly consistent philosophy of the universe of Christianity. It has taken modern scientists about two centuries to achieve a perfectly consistent philosophy of the mechanical universe of modern science. This is a fact which it is very important for us to realize, because it clearly shows where the pure philosophical positions are actually to be found.

<sup>2</sup> For a contemporary discussion of the scientific notion of cause, see Émile Meyerson, *Identité et réalité* (2d ed., Paris, Alcan, 1912), p. 42. *De l'explication dans les sciences* (Paris, Alcan, 1921), I, 57; *Essais* (Paris, J. Vrin, 1936), pp. 28-58.

If what we are after is a rational interpretation of the world of science given as an ultimate fact, either the Criticism of Kant himself or some edition of his Criticism revised to suit the demands of today's science should provide us with a satisfactory answer to our question. We might nevertheless prefer the Positivism of Comte, or some revised edition of it. A large number among our own contemporaries actually subscribe to one or the other of these two possible attitudes. The Neo-Criticism has been represented by such men as Paulsen and Vaihinger in Germany, by Renouvier in France; and it has found what will perhaps remain its purest formulation in the works of our own contemporary, Professor Leon Brunschvicg. As to Positivism, it has found important supporters in England, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, for instance; in France, Émile Littré, Émile Durkheim, and the whole French sociological school; and it has recently been revived, under a new form, by the Neo-Positivism of the Vienna school. Whatever their many differences, all these schools have at least this in common, that their ambition does not extend beyond achieving a rational interpretation of the world of science given as an irreducible and ultimate fact.

But if we do not think that science is adequate to rational knowledge,<sup>3</sup> if we hold that other than scientifically answerable problems can still be rationally posed concerning the universe, then there is no use for us to stop at the eighteenth-century Author of Nature. Why should we content ourselves with the ghost of God when we can have God? But there is no reason either why we should waste our time in weighing the respective merits of the gods of Spinoza, of Leibniz, or of Descartes. We now know what these gods are: mere by-products born of the philosophical decomposition of the Christian living God. Today our only choice is not Kant or Descartes; it is rather Kant or Thomas Aquinas. All the other positions are but halfway houses on the roads which lead either to absolute religious agnosticism or to the natural theology of Christian metaphysics.<sup>4</sup>

Philosophical halfway houses have always been pretty crowded, but never more than they are in our own times, especially in the field of natural theology. This fact is not a wholly inexplicable one. What makes it difficult for us to go back to Thomas Aquinas is Kant. Modern men are held spellbound by science, in some cases because they know it, but in an incomparably larger number of cases because they know that, to those who know science, the problem of God does not appear susceptible of a

<sup>3</sup> A critical discussion of this unduly restricted notion of rational knowledge is to be found in J. Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York, Scribner, 1938); and also in W. R. Thompson, F.R.S., *Science and Common Sense, an Aristotelian Excursion* (New York, Longmans, Green, 1937), pp. 47-50.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the philosophical manifesto of Rudolf Eucken, *Thomas von Aquino und Kant, ein Kampf zweier Welten* (Berlin, Reuther and Richard, 1901).

scientific formulation. But what makes it difficult for us to go as far as Kant is, if not Thomas Aquinas himself, at least the whole order of facts which provides a basis for his own natural theology. Quite apart from any philosophical demonstration of the existence of God, there is such a thing as a spontaneous natural theology. A quasi-instinctive tendency, observable in most men, seems to invite them to wonder from time to time if, after all, there is not such an unseen being as the one we call God. The current objection that such a feeling is but a survival in us of primitive myths, or of our own early religious education, is not a very strong one. Primitive myths do not account for the human belief in the existence of the Divinity; obviously, it is the reverse which is true. Early religious education is no sufficient explanation for the questions which sometimes arise in the minds of men concerning the reality or unreality of God. Some among us have received a decidedly antireligious education; others have had no religious education at all; and there are even quite a few who, having once received a religious education, fail to find in its memory any incentive to think too seriously of God.<sup>5</sup> The natural invitations to apply his mind to the problem come to man from quite different sources. These are the very selfsame sources which once gave rise not only to Greek mythology but to all mythologies. God spontaneously offers himself to most of us, more as a confusedly felt presence than as an answer to any problem, when we find ourselves confronted with the vastness of the ocean, the still purity of mountains, or the mysterious life of a mid-summer starry sky. Far from being social in essence, these fleeting temptations to think of God usually visit us in our moments of solitude. But there is no more solitary solitude than that of a man in deep sorrow or confronted with the tragic perspective of his own impending end. "One dies alone," Pascal says. That is perhaps the reason why so many men finally meet God waiting for them on the threshold of death.

What do such feelings prove? Absolutely nothing. They are not proofs but facts, the very facts which give philosophers occasion to ask themselves precise questions concerning the possible existence of God. Just as such personal experiences precede any attempt to prove that there is a God, they survive our failures to prove it. Pascal did not make much of the so-called proofs of God's existence. To him, it was incomprehensible that God should exist, and it was incomprehensible that God should not exist; then he would simply wager that God exists—a safe betting indeed, since there was much to gain and nothing to lose. Thus to bet is not to know, especially in a case when, if we lose, we cannot even hope to know it. Yet Pascal was still willing to bet on what he could not know. Similarly,

<sup>5</sup> Knowing the temptations to which historians sometimes succumb, I deem it safer to specify that there is nothing autobiographical in this last remark.



after proving in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that the existence of God could not be demonstrated, Kant still insisted on keeping God as at least a unifying idea in the order of speculative reason and as postulate in the moral order of practical reason. It may even appear to be true that, out of its own nature, the human mind is equally unable both to prove the existence of any God and "to escape its deep-seated instinct to personify its intellectual conceptions."<sup>6</sup> Whether we make it the result of spontaneous judgment of reason, with Thomas Aquinas; or an innate idea, with Descartes; or an intellectual intuition, with Malebranche; or an idea born of the unifying power of human reason, with Kant; or a phantasm of human imagination, with Thomas Henry Huxley, this common notion of God is there as a practically universal fact whose speculative value may well be disputed, but whose existence cannot be denied. The only problem is for us to determine the truth value of this notion.

At first sight, the shortest way to test it seems to judge it from the point of view of scientific knowledge. But the shortest way might not be the safest one. This method rests upon the assumption that nothing can be rationally known unless it be scientifically known, which is far from being an evident proposition. The names of Kant and of Comte have very little importance, if any, in the history of modern science; Descartes and Leibniz, two of the creators of modern science, have also been great metaphysicians. The simple truth may be that while human reason remains one and the same in dealing with different orders of problems, it nevertheless must approach these various orders of problems in as many different ways. Whatever our final answer to the problem of God may be, we all agree that God is not an empirically observable fact. Mystical experience itself is both unspeakable and intransmissible; hence, it cannot become an objective experience. If, speaking in the order of pure natural knowledge, the proposition "God exists" makes any sense at all, it must be for its rational value as a philosophical answer to a metaphysical question.

When a man falls to wondering whether there is such a being as God, he is not conscious of raising a scientific problem, or hoping to give it a scientific solution. Scientific problems are all related to the knowledge of *what* given things actually are. An ideal scientific explanation of the world would be an exhaustive rational explanation of *what* the world actually is; but *why* nature exists is not a scientific problem, because its answer is not susceptible of empirical verification. The notion of God, on the contrary, always appears to us in history as an answer to some existential problem, that is, as the *why* of a certain existence. The Greek gods were

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Henry Huxley, *The Evolution of Theology: an Anthropological Study*, as quoted in Julian Huxley, *Essays in Popular Science* (London, Pelican Books, 1937), p. 123.

constantly invoked in order to account for various "happenings" in the history of men as well as in that of things. A religious interpretation of nature never worries about what things are—that is a problem for scientists—but it is very much concerned with the questions why things happen to be precisely what they are, and why they happen to be at all. The Jewish-Christian God to whom we are introduced by the Bible is there at once posited as the ultimate explanation for the very existence of man, for the present condition of man upon earth, for all the successive events that make up the history of the Jewish people as well as for these momentous events: the Incarnation of Christ and the Redemption of man by Grace. Whatever their ultimate value, these are existential answers to existential questions. As such, they cannot possibly be transposed into terms of science, but only into terms of an existential metaphysics. Hence these two immediate consequences: that natural theology is in bondage not to the method of positive science but to the method of metaphysics, and that it can correctly ask its own problems only in the frame of an existential metaphysics.

Of these two conclusions, the first one is doomed to remain very unpopular. To tell the whole truth, it sounds perfectly absurd to say, and ridiculous to maintain, that the highest metaphysical problems in no way depend upon the answers given by science to its own questions. The most common view of this matter is best expressed by these words of a modern astronomer: "Before the philosophers have a right to speak, science ought first to be asked to tell all she can as to ascertain facts and provisional hypotheses. Then, and then only, may discussion legitimately pass into the realms of philosophy."<sup>7</sup> This, I quite agree, looks much more sensible than what I myself have said. But when people behave as if what I have said were false, what does happen? In 1696, John Toland decided to discuss religious problems by a method borrowed from natural philosophy. The result was his book, which I have already mentioned: *Christianity Not Mystrious*. Now, if Christianity is not mysterious, what is?

<sup>7</sup> Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (London, Pelican Books, 1937), Foreword, p. vii. The relation of philosophy to science is curiously misunderstood by some scientists. It is true that "few in this age would willingly base their lives on a philosophy which to the man of science is demonstrably false." But it does not follow that "science thus takes the place of the foundation on which the structure of our lives must be built if we wish that structure to be stable." Arthur H. Compton, *The Religion of a Scientist* (New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), p. 5. First of all, science itself is not stable. Secondly, from the fact that no set of propositions can be held as true if it contradicts another set of propositions that are demonstrably true, it does not follow that this second set of propositions must provide the foundation whereupon to establish our lives. It is quite possible, for instance, that the philosophical propositions whereupon we must establish our lives are quite independent of all conceivable sets of scientific propositions.

In 1930, in his Rede Lecture delivered before the University of Cambridge, Sir James Jeans decided to deal with philosophical problems in the light of contemporary science. The upshot was his most popular book: *The Mysterious Universe*. Now, if the universe of science is mysterious, what is not? We do not need science to tell us that the universe is indeed mysterious. Men have known that since the very beginning of the human race. The true and proper function of science is, on the contrary, to make as much of the universe as possible grow less and less mysterious to us. Science does it, and she does it magnificently. Any sixteen-year-old boy, in any one of our schools, knows more today about the physical structure of the world than Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, or Plato ever did. He can give rational explanations of phenomena which once appeared to the greatest minds as puzzling mysteries. The universe of science *qua* science exactly consists of that part of the total universe from which, owing to human reason, mysteries have been removed.

How is it, then, that a scientist can feel well founded in calling this universe a "mysterious universe"? Is it because the very progress of science brings him face to face with phenomena that are more and more difficult to observe and whose laws are more and more difficult to formulate? But the unknown is not necessarily a mystery; and science naturally proceeds upon the assumption that it is not, because it is at least knowable, even though we do not yet know it. The true reason why this universe appears to some scientists as mysterious is that, mistaking existential, that is, metaphysical, questions for scientific ones, they ask science to answer them. Naturally, they get no answers. Then they are puzzled, and they say that the universe is mysterious.

The scientific cosmogony of Sir James Jeans himself exhibits an instructive collection of such perplexities. His starting point is the actual existence of innumerable stars "wandering about space" at such enormous distances from one another "that it is an event of almost unimaginable rarity for a star to come anywhere near to another star." Yet, we must "believe" that "some two thousand million years ago, this rare event took place, and that a second star, wandering blindly through space," happened to come so near the sun that it raised a huge tidal wave on its surface. This mountainous wave finally exploded, and its fragments, still "circulating around their parent sun . . . are the planets, great and small, of which our earth is one." These ejected fragments of the sun gradually cooled; "in course of time, we know not how, when, or why, one of these cooling fragments gave birth to life." Hence, the emergence of a stream of life which has culminated in man. In a universe where empty space is deadly cold and most of the matter deadly hot, the emergence of life was highly improbable. Nevertheless, "into such a universe we have stumbled,

if not exactly by mistake, at least as the result of what may properly be described as an accident." Such is, Sir James Jeans concludes, "the surprising manner in which, so far as science can at present inform us, we came into being."<sup>8</sup>

That all this is very mysterious everybody will agree, but the question then arises: Is this science? Even if we take them, as their author evidently does, for so many "provisional hypotheses," can we consider such hypotheses as being, in any sense of the word, scientific? Is it scientific to explain the existence of man by a series of accidents, each of which is more improbable than the other one? The truth of the case simply is that on the problem of the existence of man modern astronomy has strictly nothing to say. And the same conclusion holds good if, to modern astronomy, we add modern physics. When, after describing the physical world of Einstein, Heisenberg, Dirac, Lemaître, and Louis de Broglie, he at last takes a dive into what, this time at least, he knows to be "the deep waters" of metaphysics, what conclusion does Sir James Jeans ultimately reach? That although many scientists prefer the notion of a "cyclic universe, the more orthodox scientific view" is that this universe owes its present form to a "creation" and that "its creation must have been an act of thought."<sup>9</sup> Granted. But what have these answers to do with Einstein, Heisenberg, and the justly famous galaxy of modern physicists? The two doctrines of a "cyclical universe" and of a supreme Thought were formulated by pre-Socratic philosophers who knew nothing of what Einstein would say twenty-six centuries after them. "Modern scientific theory," Jeans adds, "compels us to think of the creator as working outside time and space, which are part of his creation, just as the artist is outside his canvas."<sup>10</sup> Why should modern theory compel us to say what has already been said, not only by Saint Augustine, whom our scientist quotes, but by any and every one of countless Christian theologians who knew no other world than that of Ptolemy? Clearly enough, the philosophical answer of Sir James Jeans to the problem of the world order has absolutely nothing to do with modern science. And no wonder, since it has absolutely nothing to do with any scientific knowledge at all.

If we consider it more closely, the initial question asked by Jeans had taken him at once not only into deep waters but, scientifically speaking, out of soundings. To ask the question why, out of an infinity of possible combinations of physicochemical elements, there has arisen the living and thinking being we call man is to seek the cause why such a complex of physical energies as man actually is, or exists. In other words, it is to

<sup>8</sup> Sir James Jeans, *op. cit.*, chap. i, pp. 11-22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. v, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. v, p. 183.

inquire into the possible causes for the *existence* of living and thinking organisms upon earth. The hypothesis that living substances may tomorrow be produced by biochemists in their laboratories is irrelevant to the question. If a chemist ever succeeds in turning out living cells, or some elementary sorts of organisms, nothing will be easier for him than to say why such organisms exist. His answer will be: I made them. Our own question is not at all: Are living and thinking beings made up of nothing else than physical elements? It rather is: Supposing they ultimately consist of nothing else, how can we account for the *existence* of the very order of molecules which produces what we call life, and thought?

Scientifically speaking, such problems do not make sense. If there were no living and thinking beings, there would be no science. Hence there would be no questions. Even the scientific universe of inorganic matter is a structural universe; as to the world of organic matter, it everywhere exhibits coördination, adaptation, functions. When asked why there are such organized beings, scientists answer: Chance. Now anybody may fluke a brilliant stroke at billiards; but when a billiard player makes a run of a hundred, to say that he fluked it is to offer a rather weak explanation. Some scientists know this so well that they substitute for the notion of chance the notion of mechanical laws, which is its very reverse. But when they come to explaining how these mechanical laws have given rise to living organized beings, they are driven back to chance as to the last reason it is possible to quote. "The powers operating in the cosmos," Julian Huxley says, "are, though unitary, yet subdivisible; and, though subdivisible, yet related. There are the vast powers of inorganic nature, neutral or hostile to man. Yet they gave birth to evolving life, whose development, though blind and fortuitous, has tended in the same general direction as our own conscious desires and ideals, and so gives us an external sanction for our directional activities. This again gave birth to human mind, which, in the race, is changing the course of evolution by acceleration,"<sup>11</sup> and so on, ad infinitum. In other words, the only scientific reasons why our billiard player makes a run of a hundred are that he cannot play billiards and that all the chances are against it.

If scientists, speaking as scientists, have no intelligible answer to this problem, why are some of them so keen on talking nonsense about it? The reason is simple, and this time we can be sure that chance has nothing to do with their obstinacy. They prefer to say anything rather than to

<sup>11</sup> Julian Huxley, "Rationalism and the Idea of God," in *Essays of a Biologist*, chap. vi (London, Pelican Books, 1939), p. 176. This "scientific" cosmogony strangely resembles the *Theogony* of Hesiod, where everything is successively begotten from original Chaos

ascribe existence to God on the ground that a purpose exists in the universe. Now there is some justification for their attitude. Just as science can play havoc with metaphysics, metaphysics can play havoc with science. Coming before science in the past, it has often done so to the point of preventing its rise and of blocking its development. For centuries final causes have been mistaken for scientific explanations by so many generations of philosophers that today many scientists still consider the fear of final causes as the beginning of scientific wisdom. Science is thus making metaphysics suffer for its centuries-long meddling in matters of physics and biology.

In both cases, however, the real victim of this epistemological strife is one and the same: the human mind. Nobody denies that living organisms appear as though they had been designed, or intended, to fulfill the various functions related to life. Everybody agrees that this appearance may be but an illusion. We would be bound to hold it for an illusion if science could account for the rise of life by its usual explanations of mechanical type, where nothing more is involved than the relations of observable phenomena according to the geometrical properties of space and the physical laws of motion. What is most remarkable, on the contrary, is that many scientists obstinately maintain the illusory character of this appearance though they freely acknowledge their failure to imagine any scientific explanation for the organic constitution of living beings. As soon as modern physics had reached the structural problems raised by molecular physics, it found itself confronted with such difficulties. Yet scientists much preferred to introduce into physics the nonmechanical notions of discontinuity and indeterminacy rather than resort to anything like design. On a much larger scale, we have seen Julian Huxley boldly account for the existence of organized bodies by those very properties of matter which, according to himself, make it infinitely improbable that such bodies should ever exist. Why should those eminently rational beings, the scientists, deliberately prefer to the simple notions of design, or purposiveness, in nature, the arbitrary notions of blind force, chance, emergence, sudden variation, and similar ones? Simply because they much prefer a complete absence of intelligibility to the presence of a non-scientific intelligibility.

We seem to be here reaching at last the very core of this epistemological problem. Unintelligible as they are, these arbitrary notions are at least homogeneous with a chain of mechanical interpretations. Posited at the beginning of such a chain, or inserted in it where they are needed, they provide the scientist with the very existences which he needs in order to have something to know. Their very irrationality is expressive of the invincible resistance opposed by existence to any type of scientific explana-

tion.<sup>12</sup> By accepting design, or purposiveness, as a possible principle of explanation, a scientist would introduce into his system of laws a ring wholly heterogeneous with the rest of the chain. He would intertwine the metaphysical causes for the existence of organisms with the physical causes which he must assign to both their structure and their functioning. Still worse, he might feel tempted to mistake the existential causes of living organisms for their efficient and physical causes, thus coming back to the good old times when fishes had fins because they had been made to swim. Now it may well be true that fishes have been made to swim, but when we know it we know just as much about fishes as we know about airplanes when we know that they are made to fly. If they had not been made to fly, there would be no airplanes, since to be flying-machines is their very definition; but it takes us at least two sciences, aerodynamics and mechanics, in order to know how they do fly. A final cause has posited an existence whose science alone can posit the laws.

This heterogeneity of these two orders was strikingly expressed by Francis Bacon, when he said, speaking of final causes, that "in physics, they are impertinent, and as remoras to the ship, that hinder the sciences from holding their course of improvement."<sup>13</sup> Their scientific sterility is particularly complete in a world like that of modern science, where essences have been reduced to mere phenomena, themselves reduced to the order of that which can be observed. Modern scientists live, or they pretend to live, in a world of mere appearances, where that which appears is the appearance of nothing. Yet the fact that final causes are scientifically sterile does not entail their disqualification as metaphysical causes, and to reject metaphysical answers to a problem just because they are not scientific is deliberately to maim the knowing power of the human mind. If the only intelligible way to explain the existence of organized bodies is to admit that there is design, purposiveness, at their origin, then let us admit it, if not as scientists, at least as metaphysicians. And since the notions of design and of purpose are for us inseparable from the notion of thought, to posit the existence of a thought as cause of the purposiveness of organized bodies is also to posit an end of all ends, or an ultimate end, that is, God.

<sup>12</sup> The marked antipathy of modern science toward the notion of efficient cause is intimately related to the nonexistential character of scientific explanations. It is of the essence of an efficient cause that it makes something be, or exist. Since the relation of effect to cause is an existential and a nonanalytical one, it appears to the scientific mind as a sort of scandal which must be eliminated.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Dignity and Advancement of Learning*, Bk. II, chap. iv, ed. J. E. Creighton (New York, The Colonial Press, 1900), p. 97. Cf. p. 98: "These final causes, however, are not false, or unworthy of inquiry in metaphysics, but their excursion into the limits of physical causes has made a great devastation in that province."

It goes without saying that this is the very consequence which the adversaries of final causes intend to deny. "Purpose," Julian Huxley says, "is a psychological term; and to ascribe purpose to a process merely because its results are somewhat similar to those of a true purposeful process is completely unjustified, and a mere projection of our own ideas into the economy of nature."<sup>14</sup> This is most certainly what we do, but why should we not do so? We do not need to *project* our own ideas into the economy of nature; they belong there in their own right. Our own ideas are in the economy of nature because we ourselves are in it. Any and every one of the things which a man does intelligently is done with a purpose and to a certain end which is the final cause why he does it. Whatever a worker, an engineer, an industrialist, a writer, or an artist makes is but the actualization, by intelligently selected means, of a certain end. There is no known example of a self-made machine spontaneously arising in virtue of the mechanical laws of matter. Through man, who is part and parcel of nature, purposiveness most certainly is part and parcel of nature. In what sense then is it arbitrary, knowing from within that where there is organization there always is a purpose, to conclude that there is a purpose wherever there is organization? I fully understand a scientist who turns down such an inference as wholly nonscientific. I also understand a scientist who tells me that, as a scientist, he has no business to draw any inference as to the possible cause why organized bodies actually exist. But I wholly fail to see in what sense my inference, if I choose to draw it, is "a common fallacy."

Why should there be a fallacy in inferring that there is purpose in the universe on the ground of biological progress? Because, Julian Huxley answers, this "can be shown to be as natural and inevitable a product of the struggle for existence as is adaptation, and to be no more mysterious than, for instance, the increase in effectiveness both of armour-piercing projectiles and armour-plate during the last century."<sup>15</sup> Does Julian Huxley suggest that steel plates have spontaneously grown thicker as shells were growing heavier during the last century? In other words, does he maintain that purposiveness is as wholly absent from human industry as it is from the rest of the world? Or does he perhaps maintain that the rest of the world is as full of purposiveness as human industry obviously is? In the name of science he maintains both, namely, that adaptations in organisms are no more mysterious where there is no purposiveness to account for them, than is adaptation in human industry where purposiveness everywhere accounts for it. That adaptations due to a *purposeless* struggle for life are no more mysterious than adaptations due to a *purpose-*

<sup>14</sup> Julian Huxley, *op. cit.*, chap. vi, p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.



ful struggle—whether this proposition is “a common fallacy,” I do not know, but it certainly seems to be a fallacy. It is the fallacy of a scientist who, because he does not know how to ask metaphysical problems, obstinately refuses their correct metaphysical answers. In the *Inferno* of the world of knowledge, there is a special punishment for this sort of sin; it is the relapse into mythology. Better known as a distinguished zoologist, Julian Huxley must also be credited with having added the god Struggle to the already large family of the Olympians.<sup>16</sup>

A world which has lost the Christian God cannot but resemble a world which had not yet found him. Just like the world of Thales and of Plato, our own modern world is “full of gods.” There are blind Evolution, clear-sighted Orthogenesis, benevolent Progress, and others which it is more advisable not to mention by name. Why unnecessarily hurt the feelings of men who, today, render them a cult? It is however important for us to realize that mankind is doomed to live more and more under the spell of a new scientific, social, and political mythology, unless we resolutely exorcise these befuddled notions whose influence on modern life is becoming appalling. Millions of men are starving and bleeding to death because two or three of these pseudoscientific or pseudosocial deified abstractions are now at war. For when gods fight among themselves, men have to die. Could we not make an effort to realize that evolution is to be largely what we will make it to be? That Progress is not an automatically self-achieving law but something to be patiently achieved by the will of men? That Equality is not an actually given fact but an ideal to be progressively approached by means of justice? That Democracy is not the leading goddess of some societies but a magnificent promise to be fulfilled by all through their obstinate will for friendship, if they are strong enough to make it last for generations after generations?

I think we could, but a good deal of clear thinking should come first, and this is where, in spite of its proverbial helplessness, philosophy might be of some help. The trouble with so many of our contemporaries is not that they are agnostics but rather that they are misguided theologians. Real agnostics are exceedingly rare, and they harm nobody but themselves. Just as they have no God, these have no gods. Much more common, unfortunately, are those pseudo-agnostics who, because they combine scientific knowledge and social generosity with a complete lack of philosophical culture, substitute dangerous mythologies for the natural theology which they do not even understand.

The problem of final causes is perhaps the problem most commonly discussed by these modern agnostics. As such, it particularly recommended

<sup>16</sup> On the philosophical difficulties entailed by this notion of evolution, see W. R. Thompson, *Science and Common Sense*, pp. 216-232.

itself to our attention. It is nevertheless only one among the many aspects of the highest of all metaphysical problems, that of Being. Beyond the question: Why are there organized beings? lies this deeper one, which I am asking in Leibniz's own terms: Why is there something rather than nothing? Here again, I fully understand a scientist who refuses to ask it. He is welcome to tell me that the question does not make sense. Scientifically speaking, it does not.<sup>17</sup> Metaphysically speaking, however, it does. Science can account for many things in the world; it may some day account for all that which the world of phenomena actually is. But why anything at all is, or exists, science knows not, precisely because it cannot even ask the question.

To this supreme question, the only conceivable answer is that each and every particular existential energy, each and every particular existing thing, depends for its existence upon a pure Act of existence.<sup>18</sup> In order to be the ultimate answer to all existential problems, this supreme cause has to be absolute existence.<sup>19</sup> Being absolute, such a

<sup>17</sup> The hostility exhibited by a wholly mathematized science toward the irreducible act of existence is what lies behind its opposition, so well marked by H. Bergson, to duration itself. Malebranche considered the existence of matter as indemonstrable; hence his conclusion that the annihilation of the material world by God would in no way affect our scientific knowledge of it. Sir Arthur Eddington would certainly not subscribe to Malebranche's metaphysics; but his own approach to the problem of existence is an epistemological one, namely, this particular body of knowledge which we call modern physics; hence the analogous consequence that, from such a point of view, "the question of attributing a mysterious property called *existence* to the physical universe never arises." *The Philosophy of Physical Science* (Cambridge, University Press, 1939), chap. x, pp. 156-157. As a substitute for the "metaphysical concept of *real existence*," Sir Arthur offers a "structural concept of existence," which he defines in pp. 162-166. In point of fact, there is a metaphysical concept of *being*, which is not "hazy" (p. 162), but analogical; as to actual existence, it is not an object of concept, but of judgment. To substitute "structural existence" for "real existence" is to be headed for the conclusion that "independent existence" is, for a given element, "its existence as a contributor to the structure," whereas its nonexistence is "a hole occurring in, or added to, the structure" (p. 165). In other words, the *independent* existence, or nonexistence, of an element is strictly dependent upon its whole. To exist is "to be a-contributor-to"; to cease to exist is to cease "to be a-contributor-to." Yet, in order to be a contributor to some whole, a thing has first to be; and to define the death of a man by the hole it creates in his family is to take a rather detached view of what appears to the dying man himself as an intensely individuated event.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Arthur Eddington complains that philosophers do nothing to make clear to "laymen" what the word "existence" means. *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, chap. x, pp. 154-157. As an example of its ambiguity, Sir Arthur quotes the judgment: There is an overdraft at the bank. Is an "overdraft at a bank" something that exists? The answer is: Yes, and no. The verbal form "is" has two distinct meanings, according as it designates: (1) the actual existence of a thing; (2) the composition of a predicate with a subject in a judgment. What exists at the bank, in sense number one, is a draft; but it is true, in sense number two, that "this draft is an overdraft." To say that "a draft is an overdraft," is by no means to say that an "overdraft" actually is, or exists.

<sup>19</sup> Some scientists, who still realize the value of the argument on the basis of design, would say that they do not feel "the need of a Creator to start the Universe." A. H.

cause is self-sufficient; if it creates, its creative act must be free. Since it creates not only being but order, it must be something which at least eminently contains the only principle of order known to us in experience, namely, thought. Now an absolute, self-subsisting, and knowing cause is not an It but a He. In short, the first cause is the One in whom the cause of both nature and history coincide, a philosophical God who can also be the God of a religion.<sup>20</sup>

To go one step further would be to match the mistake of some agnostics with a similar one. The failure of too many metaphysicians to distinguish between philosophy and religion has proved no less harmful to natural theology than have the encroachments of pseudometaphysical science. Metaphysics posits God as a pure Act of existence, but it does not provide us with any concept of His essence. We know that He is; we do not comprehend Him. Simple-minded metaphysicians have unwillingly led agnostics to believe that the God of natural theology was the "watchmaker" of Voltaire, or the "carpenter" of cheap apologetics. First of all, no watch has ever been made by any watchmaker; "watchmakers" as such simply do not exist; watches are made by men who know how to make watches. Similarly, to posit God as the supreme cause of that which is, is to know that He is He who can create, because He is "He who is";

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Compton, *The Religion of a Scientist*, p. 11. In other words, they do not realize that these two problems are identically the same. Design appears to them as a fact whose *existence* calls for an explanation. Why then should not the protons, electrons, neutrons, and photons be considered as facts whose *existence* also calls for some explanation? In what sense is the existence of these elements less mysterious than that of their composite? What prevents many scientists from going as far as to ask this second question is that, this time, they cannot fail to perceive the nonscientific character of the problem. Yet the nature of the two problems is the same. If the cause for the *existence* of organisms lies outside the nature of their physicochemical elements, it transcends the physical order; hence it is transphysical, that is, metaphysical, in its own right. In other words, if there is nothing in the elements to account for design, the presence of design in a chaos of elements entails just as necessarily a *creation* as the very existence of the elements.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. A. H. Compton is an interesting instance of those many scientists who do not seem to be aware of crossing any border lines when they pass from science to philosophy and from philosophy to religion. To them the "hypothesis God" is just one more of those "working hypotheses" which a scientist provisionally accepts as true in spite of the fact that none of them can be proved. Hence the consequence that "faith in God may be a thoroughly scientific attitude, even though we may be unable to establish the correctness of our belief." *The Religion of a Scientist*, p. 13. This is a regrettable confusion of language. It is true the principle of the conservation of energy and the notion of evolution are hypotheses; but they are *scientific* hypotheses because, according as we accept or reject them, our scientific interpretation of observable facts is bound to become different. The existence or nonexistence of God, on the contrary, is a proposition whose negation or affirmation determines no change whatever in the structure of our scientific explanation of the world and is wholly independent of the contents of science as such. Supposing, for instance, there be design in the world, the existence of God cannot be posited as a *scientific* explanation for the presence of design in the world; it is a *metaphysical* one; consequently, God has not to be posited as a *scientific probability* but as a *metaphysical necessity*.

but this tells us still less concerning what absolute existence can be than any piece of carpentry tells us about the man who made it. Being men, we can affirm God only on anthropomorphic grounds, but this does not oblige us to posit Him as an anthropomorphic God. As Saint Thomas Aquinas says:

The verb *to be* is used in two different ways: in a first one, it signifies the act of existing (*actu essendi*); in the second one it signifies the composition of those propositions which the soul invents by joining a predicate with a subject. Taking *to be* in the first way, we cannot know the "to be" of God (*esse Dei*), no more than we know His essence. We know it in the second way only. For, indeed, we know that the proposition we are forming about God, when we say: God is, is a true proposition, and we know this from His effects.<sup>21</sup>

If such be the God of natural theology, true metaphysics does not culminate in a concept, be it that of Thought, of Good, of One, or of Substance. It does not even culminate in an essence, be it that of Being itself. Its last word is not *ens*, but *esse*; not *being*, but *is*. The ultimate effort of true metaphysics is to posit an Act by an act, that is, to posit by an act of judging the supreme Act of existing whose very essence, because it is to be, passes human understanding. Where a man's metaphysics comes to an end, his religion begins. But the only path which can lead him to the point where the true religion begins must of necessity lead him beyond the contemplation of essences, up to the very mystery of existence. This path is not very hard to find, but few are those who dare to follow it to the end. Seduced as they are by the intelligible beauty of science, many men lose all taste for metaphysics and religion. A few others, absorbed in the contemplation of some supreme cause, become aware that metaphysics and religion should ultimately meet, but they cannot tell how or where; hence they separate religion from philosophy, or else they renounce religion for philosophy, if they do not, like Pascal, renounce philosophy for religion. Why should not we keep truth, and keep it whole? It can be done. But only those can do it who realize that He Who is the God of the philosophers is HE WHO IS, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.

<sup>21</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, Pars I, qu. 3, art. 4, ad 2<sup>m</sup>.

JACQUES MARITAIN

# Action and Contemplation\*

## I. GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The debate between action and contemplation not only concerns each of us personally, but is also of vital importance to human culture and to the destiny of civilization. I hold it to be of special moment to this continent, as I shall try to suggest at the end of this chapter.

We know well enough how emphatic the East is about its calling to the contemplative life and how proud of it; while the West with no less pride,—a pride which is beginning to suffer much,—boasts that it has chosen action. Could this lead us to affirm without more ado that the East is contemplation and the West action? Such an affirmation would be all too simple. Things do not tell their secrets so easily. Occidental activism might be, in its misery and agony, a degenerated and pathetic form of what was once an incomparable sentiment of life and human values. The West, I believe, had once a habit of contemplation in harmony with the deepest postulations of spiritual reality.

In philosophical language the problem of action and contemplation is that of *transitive* (or *productive*) and *immanent* activity (immanent activity in its most typical and purest function).

Transitive activity is that which one being exercises upon another, the so-called patient, in order to act upon it, imparting to it movement or energy. This activity, which is quite visible, is characteristic of the world of bodies; through it all elements of material nature inter-communicate, and through it we act on matter, transforming it. It passes away in Time, and with Time. Not only is it transitory, it is transition. The Greeks were right in saying that in this activity, the action in which the agent and the

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\* From *Scholasticism and Politics*, by Jacques Maritain, Chapter VII, pp. 163-183. Macmillan, New York, and Geoffrey Bles, London. Reprinted by permission.

patient intercommunicate is accomplished in the patient, *actio in passio*, and being common to both, makes the agent (notwithstanding its being as such the nobler of the two) dependent on the patient, in which alone it obtains perfection. The Agent is itself *in actu* and attains its perfection only by acting on another than itself, and in the instant of this action. Transitive action is a mendicant action, which achieves itself in another being, and is essentially in need of another being. On the other hand, while the agent's perfection is also, in fact, that of the patient, the agent as such does not seek the patient's good, but its own (this is a typical characteristic of purely transitive action). Hence its 'egotism'. People who exercise philanthropy as a transitive activity need the poor to help if they want to be helpful, sinners to preach to if they want to be preachers, victims whose wrongs they can redress. They need *patients*.

Immanent activity is of quite a different order. It is the characteristic activity of life and spirit. Here the agent has its own perfection in itself; it elevates itself in being. Immanent action is a self-perfecting quality. The acts of knowing and of loving are not only within the soul, they are for the soul an active superexistence, as it were, superior to the merely physical act of existence. Thus the soul, when it knows, becomes thereby something that it is not, and when it loves, aspires toward what it is not, as to another self. This action, as such, is above time.

It speaks for Aristotle's greatness to have known and taught that immanent (or vital or interiorizing) action is nobler and more elevated than transitive (or non-vital or exteriorizing) action.

In their doctrine of immanent action, the Greeks held that the immanence of the intellectual act is, as such, more perfect than that of the act of will; that is why, according to a thesis which St. Thomas made classical, intelligence is nobler than will, from the sole point of view of the degrees of immanence and immateriality of the powers of the soul.

All this led the Greeks to a twofold conclusion, which, in its first part, formulated a most valuable truth; and, in its second part, transformed that truth into a great error.

The great truth which the Greeks discovered (and which their philosophers conceptualized in very divers spiritual ways) is the superiority of contemplation, as such, to action. As Aristotle puts it, life according to the intellect is better than a merely human life.

But the error follows. What did that assertion mean to them practically? It meant that mankind lives for the sake of a few intellectuals. There is a category of specialists,—the philosophers,—who lead a superhuman life; then in a lower category, destined to serve them, come those who lead the ordinary human life, the civil or political one; they in turn are served by those who lead a sub-human life, the life of work,—that is, the slaves.

The high truth of the superiority of contemplative life was bound up with the contempt of work and the plague of slavery. Even the work of freemen, of the artist or the artisan, was scorned. Plutarch wrote: 'Who, having the choice, would not prefer enjoying the contemplation of Phidias' works, to being Phidias himself?' 'All artisans have a despicable occupation, because there can be nothing noble in a workshop', said 'the good Cicero'. And farther to the East, the Brahmin's contemplation reposes socially on the untouchables' misery; wisdom, on offence and humiliation.

## II. CHRISTIANITY

Christianity has transfigured everything.

What innovations did Christianity introduce on the subject with which we are dealing? I should say they are fourfold.

First, it teaches us that love is better than intelligence. St. Thomas admits, like Aristotle, that considering the degrees of immanence and immateriality of the powers of the soul in themselves, intelligence is nobler than will, but he adds that considering the *things* we know and love, these things exist in us by knowledge according to the mode of existence and the dignity of our own soul, but by love they attract us to them according to their own mode of existence and their own dignity, and therefore it must be said that to love things that are superior to man is better than to know them. It is better to love God than to know Him; it is also better to love our brethren, in whom the mystery of God's likeness is concealed, than to know them. And the love which is *Caritas* is, not in the moral order only, but in the ontological as well, that which is most excellent and most perfect in the human soul and in the Angel.

Second, Christianity has transfigured the notion of contemplation, and endowed it with a new meaning. Albert the Great sums it up in his admirable treatise *de Adhaerendo Deo*: 'The contemplation of the philosophers', he writes, 'is concerned with the perfection of the contemplator, and hence does not go farther than the intellect, so that their end is intellectual knowledge. But the contemplation of the saints is concerned with the love of the one who is contemplated—of God. And this is why, not content with the intellect, with knowledge as its ultimate end, it attains the heart through love, *transit ad affectum per amorem*.' And love indeed is its own instrument, love's dark fire is its light. *Quia ubi amor, ibi oculus*. This leads to consequences, which we shall presently see, and which make the word 'contemplation' rather unsatisfactory.

Third, Christianity has also transfigured the notion of action and has given it a new meaning. Christian wisdom has seen, better than the wisdom of philosophers, that the action which man exercises on matter

or other men, though it is transitive, cannot be reduced to transitive action such as is found in the world of bodies. It is essentially human activity. It has not only been thought and willed before being exercised,—being born in the heart before being made manifest in the external world; it not only necessarily proceeds from an immanent act, but, moreover, it goes beyond the work it serves, and by an instinct of communication which demands to be perfected in goodness, proceeds to the service of other men. You can give high wages to a workman for work manifestly useless,—for instance, the task, which used to be imposed on convicts, of digging holes and then filling them up,—and this workman will be driven to despair. It is essential to human work that it be useful to men.

As has often been remarked, Christ in assuming for Himself the work and condition of an artisan in a small village, rehabilitated labour, and manifested its natural dignity, a dignity which Antiquity had denied. The *hardship* of work is a consequence of the Fall and of the loss of privileges proper to the state of innocence, but not *work in itself*. Adam in the state of innocence worked—without any pain—and had the mission of cultivating and keeping the Garden.

Man's labour in its first and humblest stage is a co-operation with God the Creator, and Christianity's rehabilitation of labour in the moral order is bound up with revelation, in the dogmatic order, of creation *ex nihilo*. *Pater meus usque mod operatur, et ego operor*. My Father worketh hitherto and I work too. Here is the foundation of labour ethics, which the modern world is seeking and has not yet found. The work which Antiquity most despised, manual work, imposes the forms of reason on matter, and delivers man from the fatalities of material nature (provided however he does not turn his industry into an idol which enslaves him even more); thus, work has a value of natural redemption; it is like a remote prefiguration of the communications of love. Man is both *homo faber* and *homo sapiens*, and he is *homo faber* before being in truth and actually *homo sapiens* and in order to become the latter.

Fourth, and this is a consequence of the preceding considerations, another innovation which Christianity has introduced, relevant to our subject, is that contemplation (supernatural contemplation, which would be better called *entrance into the very states of God, of God Incarnate*) is not only the business of specialists or of the chosen few. This was an astounding revolution in the spiritual order. Greeks and Jews, masters and slaves, men and women, poor and rich (but the poor, first), souls who have known evil and souls (if there be such) who have not, whatever their condition, race and wounds,—all are called to the feast of divine Love and divine wisdom. That wisdom calls them all, it clamours in the public



places and in the roadways. All, without exception, are called to perfection, which is the same as that of the Father who is in heaven; in a manner either close or distant, all are called to the contemplation of the saints, not the contemplation of the philosophers, but to loving and crucified contemplation. All without exception. The universality of such an appeal is one of the essential features of Christianity's *catholicity*.

At the same time and symmetrically, all are bound by the law of work. There are no more privileged by pain and labour. Work is for everyone, as well as the sin of which everyone must be cured. If any will not work, neither shall he eat. It is St. Paul who said this, and the evolution of modern societies shows more clearly every day how universal that assertion is. I know well that some people who have adopted it as a motto, not knowing its author, perhaps, give it a wrong interpretation, believing that there is but one kind of work,—that which creates economic values. They fail to see the admirable analogical variety of the notion of work. According to the social conscience which the Christian heaven has awakened, no one can be dispensed from activities directed to the good of men, be it to clothe or feed their bodies, to teach them or guide them, to bring them to truth and beauty or delights of the spirit, to feed them with the words of God, or, like those dedicated to contemplative life, to wear oneself out in praying for them. All those varied activities are fraternal, and communicate analogically in that notion of work which the Christian spirit has renewed.<sup>1</sup>

I have just said that the notion of work is verified in a most refined way, even in those dedicated to the contemplative life. It is true that contemplation itself is in fact not work, not a thing of utility. It is a fruit. It is not ordinary leisure; it is a leisure coinciding with the very highest activity of the human substance. According to the profound views of St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, those who go beyond the sociotemporal life achieve in themselves the supra-social good to which the social tends as to a transcendent term, and by that very act are free from the law of labour. There remains no more for them but Thee and I, Him whom they love, and themselves.

But in virtue of that generosity which is inherent in immanent activity at its highest degrees, loving contemplation overflows as a protection and a benediction to society. And though not itself a useful service or a work, even in the widest meaning of the word, that which is beyond usefulness

<sup>1</sup> I do not think that the word 'work' and concept of work must be reserved only to manual work and to intellectual activities preparing for or regulating the latter. I consider the fact of some things, being *per se*, or by itself, related to the utility of the human community, as the true criterion of work in the ethico-social sense. And lawyers, statesmen, teachers, have an activity no less related to the usefulness of the community than the activity of farmers or miners.

superabounds thus in a usefulness, in which the notion of work is still realized at the extreme limit of refinement.

Thus, it will be understood why I have said above that all activities, from manual labour to the gratuitously added utility of contemplative leisure, are fraternal activities, in which the notion of work can be found at very different degrees of analogy.

Christianity has not condemned slavery as a social and juridical form, save in its most extreme modes, which are absolutely incompatible with human dignity. It has done better by annihilating, from within, its functional necessity in human conscience. It has evacuated that necessity from conscience, and is evacuating it progressively from existence (for ancient slavery is not the only form of servitude), and it will require the entire history of mankind to have completely finished with it. For Christian conscience, as I have just pointed out, there do not exist two categories in humanity, *homo faber* whose task is to work, and *homo sapiens* whose task is the contemplation of truth. The same man is both *faber* and *sapiens*, and wisdom calls us all to the freedom of the children of God.

### III. SUPERABOUNDING CONTEMPLATION

The contemplation of which I have been speaking is Christian contemplation,—what Albert the Great, in the text quoted above, called *contemplatio sanctorum*. The Christian doctors tell us that it is supernatural, that is to say, it is achieved by the gifts which Sanctifying Grace,—formal participation in us of divine nature,—brings to the soul; and not only by its object, but in its mode as well, it goes beyond anything that the energies of human nature, left to themselves, can achieve.

It can be called Christian in a historical sense, since for nearly two thousand years Christian contemplators have made it manifest to us. It can be called Christian in a different sense, ontological or metaphysical, since it lives by the grace of Christ. In that sense it can even be found,—substantially the same, whatever the difference of mode, degree, purity, or human setting,—in eras or lands where Christianity is not professed. It is the supernatural contemplation of the Old Testament and the New, of Moses and St. Paul, such as is exercised by the living faith and supernatural gifts. The existence of these divine gifts is taught us by Christian revelation, but they are alive in all who have the grace of Christ, even when not belonging visibly to His Church (for instance, some of the Jewish Hassidim whose story was told by Martin Buber, or that great Mohammedan mystic Al Hallaj, whom Louis Massignon has studied).

At the same time, supernatural contemplation achieves and fulfils a natural aspiration to contemplation which is consubstantial to man, and to which the Sages of India and Greece bear witness. According to Albert

the Great, this natural contemplation, as such, has its term in intellect and knowledge. No doubt, love can crown *gnosis*, but here it remains an effect; it does not constitute the proper end of the contemplative act itself, nor the proper mean of it.<sup>2</sup>

It must be remarked that there are in the spirit many activities, discursive activity and activity of desire, which are neither repose nor contemplation.

But while being a labour, this labour of the intelligence and of the heart tends toward contemplation and prepares for it, and in this measure participates in the end to which it is directed. It follows that there is a vast region of life of the spirit, where contemplation is prepared, even outlined, not being, for all that, disengaged from active life and laborious activity. In this wider sense, the philosopher and the poet can be said to be already contemplative on the plane of natural activities.

This should help us to resolve a rather difficult problem. In the order of the Kingdom of God and eternal life, many are surprised by the theological teaching that action is directed to contemplation. In the order of temporal life and terrestrial civilization, the philosopher has to acknowledge that same law of work being directed in the end to contemplation and to the activities of repose. But what activity of repose and what contemplation? The contemplation of the saints is not a proper and direct end of the political life. It would be more than a paradox to give as a direct end to the life of men, as members of a terrestrial community and as part of the temporal universe of civilization, the transcendent and superterrestrial end which is their absolutely ultimate end as consorts with the saints, and souls redeemed at a great price; in other words, to solve the question of the workmen's leisure by saying that work has for its end, on the ethico-social plane, mystical union, prelude to the ultimate end. And yet, even in the ethico-social order, work is not its own end; its end is rest. Is it then directed to leisure and holidays, understood as a mere cessation of work, a pleasure, or honest pastime, a family party, winter sports, or the movies? If so, it would then be directed to something less noble and less generous than itself. We are far from looking with scorn on rest and relaxation which recreates the worn out human substance. But that rest is but a preparation to a renewed labour, just as sleep prepares for the toils of the day.

In reality, human work, even on the plane of social terrestrial life, must be accomplished with a view to an active and self-sufficient rest, to a terminal activity of an immanent and spiritual order, already partici-

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these questions, see our essay on *L'expérience mystique naturelle et le vide*, in *Études Carmélitaines*, October, 1938.

pating in some measure in contemplation's supertemporality and generosity. For all that, such active rest is not yet the rest of contemplation properly speaking; it has not yet attained to contemplation. Let us say it is the active rest of the culture of the mind and the heart, the joy of knowing, the spiritual delectations which art and beauty offer us, the generous enthusiasm supplied by disinterested love, compassion and communion, zeal for justice, devotion to the commonwealth and to mankind. The very law of work to which every member of the commonwealth has to submit, demands that all should have access to that leisure. There is nothing here that is contemplation, properly speaking. But if in this kind of leisure, instead of shutting up human concerns in themselves, man remains open to what is higher than himself, and is borne by the natural movement which draws the human soul to the infinite, all this would be contemplation in an inchoate state or in preparation.

But enough of this. Let us ask St. Thomas and the theologians what they think of supernatural contemplation.<sup>3</sup> In a famous passage, St. Thomas says first that, absolutely speaking and in itself, contemplative life is better than active life. This is a thesis characteristic of any conception of life worthy of the human person's dignity,—the fundamental thesis of the intrinsic superiority of contemplation. St. Thomas proves it by eight reasons drawn from Aristotle and illuminated by eight texts from Scripture. And there is, he says, a ninth reason, added by the Lord when He says: 'Mary has chosen the better part.'

After this, there is a second point of doctrine to be considered: contemplation, being the highest degree of the life of the soul, cannot be an instrument of the moral virtues and the operations of active life, but the end to which those things have to be directed as means and dispositions.

A third point, made manifest by the example of Christian contemplatives and by the teaching of theologians, is that the contemplation of the saints does not merely attain to the heart through love. Not being confined to the intellect, being the fruit of love in act through which faith becomes as it were a thing of experience, this contemplation also enters the sphere of action, in virtue of the generosity and abundance of love, which consists in giving oneself. Action then springs from the superabundance of contemplation, *ex superabundantia contemplationis*, be it by the very reason of the *nature* of the work it produces, (thus preaching things divine must overflow from a heart united to God or be vain,) or by reason of the *mode* of the production, which makes a work, whatever it is, an instrument employed by sovereign Love to touch and vivify the heart.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jacques et Raissa Maritain, *Prayer and Intelligence*, Sheed and Ward, 1928.

It is by virtue of such a superabundance, which comes from the supernatural ordination of human life to the fruition of God, that Christian wisdom, unlike that of the philosophers, is not merely speculative, but practical as well, and directive of human life, for this life is not regulated by human measures only, but by divine as well, and thus becomes the object of that very knowledge which contemplates God. More excellent than any purely intellectual wisdom, because it attains closer to God, being a wisdom of love and union, the act of the gift of wisdom is not a self-sufficing contemplation, but one which, as St. Paul puts it, walks toward them that are without, redeeming time.

When explaining the words of Jesus: 'Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' St. John of the Cross, the great doctor of contemplation, liked to recall Dionysius's sentence: the divinest of all things divine, is to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls; which means, St. John of the Cross tells us, 'that the supreme perfection of every creature, in its own hierarchy and degree, is to ascend and grow according to its talent and resources in the imitation of God; and it is most admirable and most divine to co-operate with Him in the conversion and salvation of souls. God's own works are resplendent in that.'

We have arrived here at a fundamental truth: Christian philosophy is a philosophy of being; more than that, a philosophy of the superabundance of being; and in this it stands incomparably higher than other great philosophies of being, such as Hindu metaphysics, where being does not give being and can but absorb in itself—*maya* and soul itself. Christian philosophy, better than the Greek, has seen that it is natural that immanent activity should superabound, since it is superexisting. Purely transitive activity is egoistic, as I have said at the beginning of this chapter. Immanent activity is 'generous', because, striving to be achieved in love, it strives to achieve the good of other men, disinterestedly, gratuitously, as a gift. Christian theology is a theology of divine generosity, of that superabundance of divine being which is manifested in God Himself, as only revelation can tell us, in the plurality of Persons, and which is also manifested, as we could have discovered by reason alone, by the fact that God is Love, and that He is the Creator. And God, whose essence is His own beatitude and His own eternal contemplation, God who creates, gives, has never ceased to give, He gives Himself through Incarnation, He gives Himself through the Holy Ghost's mission. It is not for Himself, St. Thomas says, it is for us that God has made everything to His glory. When contemplation superabounds in efficacious love and in action, it corresponds within us to that divine superabundance communicative of its own good.

## IV. THE CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

That is what philosophers can be taught about supernatural contemplation both by theology and by the experience of the saints. Properly speaking, such a contemplation is a participation in the divine life and perfection itself,—an entrance, as I said above, into the very states of the Word Incarnate. It is that purely and simply terminal freedom of exaltation and of autonomy, mentioned in a preceding chapter.

But have I not said that Christianity's great novelty is its universalism, which calls all men to what is most difficult, to perfect life, a life of union and contemplation? Let us consider this more closely. It was much discussed, some years ago, whether contemplative graces are exceptional not only *de facto* but also *de jure*, whether it is temerarious to desire or hope for them, or whether they are the normal flower within us of the living grace of virtues and gifts. This discussion, momentous to all who are anxious to know man, has been complicated by many extraneous considerations springing either from inadequate vocabulary, or practical pre-occupations. I shall say a word about it before finishing.

The anti-mystical tendencies, which have developed since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were generated by an all too legitimate fear, that of shame and quietism; the wine of the Holy Ghost is apt to go to one's head when mingled with the alcohols of imagination. Books of spirituality, not those only which make commonplace literature out of the saints' experiences, but even those of authentic spirituality, are apt, when falling into impatient and weak hands, to cause many a victim which psychiatry claims as its own. It is terrible to throw anything divine to men, who make use of everything to feed their chimeras.

And yet God, who is wise, has dared to do that terrible thing; and at what risk, when giving us His Truth. If books were judged by the bad uses man can put them to, what book has been more misused than the Bible? Let us live dangerously, says Nietzsche; that is a pleonasm. One is out of danger only when dead. To turn souls away from aspiring to the graces of contemplative union, to deprive them of the teaching and advices of a St. Thérèse or a St. John of the Cross, is to deprive them of the channels of life, to condemn them to a parching thirst. If anti-mystical tendencies were completely systematized, they would turn Christianity into a mere moral system, while it is, first of all, a theological communion.

And this is why in the discussion to which I referred, theologians are coming to an agreement (though with many differences of nuance) on the point that all souls are called, if not in a proximate manner, at least

in a remote one, to mystical contemplation as being the normal blossoming of grace's virtues and gifts.

For if we define mystical life (or life according to the spirit) as a coming of the soul under the regimen in which the gifts of Grace, called in sacred terminology gifts of the Holy Ghost, predominate (so that henceforth the soul is docile to the spirit of God, who disappropriating it of itself, takes it into His own charge), then it is clear that every soul is called,—at least in a remote manner,—to mystical life *thus defined*. Why is that so? Because all are called to the perfection of love. And that perfection cannot be attained without the radical purifications and substantial remouldings which are the mystical life's sacrificial privilege. St. Thomas teaches us that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary to *salvation*, because we are so foolish that we could not, on certain difficult occasions to which we are all exposed, make by ourselves the proper use of theological and moral virtues to avoid *mortal sins*; then it must be said with still more reason that we are too foolish and too miserable to make by ourselves the proper use of those virtues to *attain perfection*, and hence it is necessary for this aim that the gifts of the Holy Ghost should govern our life as directive habits.

We must now observe that among the inspiring gifts which Catholic theology has learned to enumerate from Isaiah, some, like those of Counsel, Force, Fear, mainly concern action, while others, like those of Intelligence and Wisdom, are mainly related to contemplation.

It follows that souls which have entered upon the ways of spiritual life will behave in very different manners, each according to its calling. Some will be favoured in a pre-eminent manner with the highest gifts, those of Wisdom and Intelligence; these souls will represent mystical life in its normal plenitude, and will have the grace of contemplation in its typical forms, be they arid or comforting. In the case of other souls it will be primarily the other gifts of inspired freedom; their life will be indeed a mystical and disappropriated life; but it will be such pre-eminently in relation to their activities and works, and they will not have the typical and normal forms of contemplation.

They will not be, for all that, deprived of contemplation, of participating and experiencing lovingly the divine states. For St. Thomas teaches us that all the gifts of the Holy Ghost are connected and therefore cannot be present in the soul without the gift of Wisdom; though in the case we are dealing with, it will be exercised in a less apparent way, and in an atypical, attenuated, or discontinuous mode. The contemplation of the 'active' souls will be *masked* and inapparent, but they will have contemplative graces; perhaps they will be capable only of saying

rosaries, and mental prayer will bring them only headache or sleep. Mysterious contemplation will not be in their way of praying but in the grace of their behaviour, in their sweet-minded hands, perhaps, or in their way of walking perhaps, or in their way of looking at a poor man or at suffering.

It should perhaps be added that contemplative life is superhuman, whereas the active life is connatural to man and better adapted to the equilibrium of his natural energies. It appears that the forms of contemplation to which souls faithful to grace will actually attain most often, will not be the typical one, where the supernatural sweeps away everything, at the risk of breaking everything, but rather the atypical and masked forms which I have just mentioned, where the superhuman condescends in some measure to the human and consorts with it.

We see now with what nuances and distinctions we should understand the theological doctrine, which we have been reviewing, of every single soul being called to contemplative graces. Each is called, if only in a remote manner, to contemplation, *typical or atypical*, apparent or masked, which is the multiform exercise of the gift of Wisdom, free and unseizable, and transcending all our categories, and capable of all disguises, all surprises.

In this sense, if all this is borne in mind, the Thomist theses about contemplation,—its necessity for the perfection of Christian life and its intrinsic superiority over action,—appear in their manifest truth.

The doctrine I have stated summarily means that Christian contemplation springs forth from that Spirit which bloweth where it listeth, and one hears His voice and no one knows whence He comes or whither He goes. It means that Christian contemplation is not the affair of *specialists* or *technicians*. The active ways through which the soul disposes itself to it are not techniques, but only fallible preparations to receive a free gift, fallible preparations which this gift always transcends.

Natural spirituality has techniques which are well determined and are, moreover, good and useful. This apparatus of techniques strikes everybody who begins to study comparative Mysticism. Now, the most obvious difference between the Christian and the other mystics is the freedom of the former from any techniques, recipes or formulas. It is, essentially, not esoteric or *reserved to specialists*.

We meet here with two difficulties which I should like to mention, and which are due, the one to vocabulary, the other to the masters.

There is a difficulty which comes from vocabulary. It is that *words* are specialists. They cannot have the amplitude of transcendentals. They particularize what they denote, in virtue of their past, and of the associations, sometimes extremely heavy, which they drag along with them.



That word 'mystic', for instance, which I have used all through this essay because I had to, is not satisfactory. It evokes a procession of phenomena, ecstasies, and extraordinary gifts belonging, when they are genuine, to what theologians call *charisms* or gratuitous graces,—which has nothing to do with the essence of the mystical or disappropriated life, as we understand that word: since we have (following the theologians) defined mystical life by the dominating regimen of the Holy Ghost's gifts,—the *habitus* of inspired freedom,—which are quite different from charisms. The word 'contemplation' is hardly better. I have already said it is quite unsatisfactory. It leads a good many people into error, making them believe that it pertains to some spectacular curiosity. It carries with it a Greek past, the Greek notion of theoretical life. We have seen, at the beginning of this essay, with what care we ought to strip the great truths of Antiquity of the errors which grow parasitically on them. Shall we then try to find other words? That would be vain. The new words would soon become clichés as misleading as the old ones. We must accept the fact, and particularly in this matter, that words cannot relieve us of the effort of thinking.

Nor can the masters! This is the second difficulty I wish to note. The masters, too, are inevitably specialists, specialists of what they teach. St. John of the Cross is a specialist of contemplation and heroism. He teaches a common way, a way open to all (to 'all those who have heard' in a proximate manner the call of God); but he teaches this common way according to the purest and *most typical* paradigm of the states through which it leads. In brief, he speaks to all, to all those who have entered on the road, by addressing himself to a few Carmelite nuns of the noblest trend. Through them, he speaks to all. This means that we who read him are expected to hear him according to a whole key-board of analogical values, to hear with *universal resonances*, and in a non-specialized sense, what he says as a specialist of genius. To understand him differently would be to betray him. Thus, for instance, concerning the nights and the passive purifications which he describes, one must grasp the fact that in other circumstances and in other states of life, these typical forms can be supplemented by other ordeals originating in events or in men, and which play an analogous purifying role. By pursuing this line of reflections one would see many things become more plain. One would also begin to see what is the role of a St. Thérèse of Lisieux, teaching in truth the *same doctrine* as St. John of the Cross, and the same heroism, but in the simplicity, entirely denuded and *common*, of the 'small way'.

## V. ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

To come back to where we started, to the debate of East and West,

we see, if what we have said be true, that activism and pragmatism, the rejection of contemplative values, the dethronement of Wisdom, are the West's greatest woe. It seems as if to-day the West sought a remedy in the frantic exaggeration of this evil. The attempts to create new civilizations which are taking form before our eyes,—where the civil community becomes the soul of a dynamism which is purely activist, industrial and warlike, and mobilizes for that active end both science and thought,—do not make our prognostications optimistic. The West has here much to learn from the East and from its fidelity to the primacy of contemplative values.

But, at the same time, what I want to point out is that, while denouncing the errors and shortcomings of our unhappy West, the Christian feels for it a piety that is filial, and can plead its cause in the face of the East. For this activism and pragmatism are the catastrophe of a truly great thing which the spirit of separation from God has led astray. I mean the generosity, the propensity to give and communicate, the sense of ontological superabundance springing from Evangelical Love, and of holy contemplation superabounding in activity.

And the impassible contemplation which the East boasts of,—which proceeds from the energies of the soul striving toward liberation by techniques and formulas, by the athletic efforts of ascetics, and of active concentration,—manifests, on its part, in the very order of spiritual things, a pragmatism that is infinitely more subtle, but which no less withdraws from the testimony that God expects from mankind.

Let us remember the great words which St. Thomas wrote about the Incarnation, and which to my mind throw the deepest light upon those problems: 'In the Mystery of Incarnation,' he says, 'the movement of *descent* of divine plenitude into the depths of human nature is more important than the movement of ascent of human nature toward God.' This is a truth that holds good, not only for the Head but for the whole of the Body. It explains to us how supernatural contemplation, proceeding thus from the descent within us of divine plenitude, superabounds within us in love and activity.

We hold that the West will not surmount the crises in which it is engaged, unless it reconquers that vital truth, and understands that external activity must overflow from a superabundance of internal activity, by which man is united to truth and to the source of being. If the East, perhaps because its efforts toward contemplation aspired above all toward philosophical forms of contemplation, has given great importance to natural contemplation and spirituality, even in things that belonged to the secular and temporal order; one might ask if in the West, by a sort of division of labour, spirituality and contemplation,—not philosophical

but supernatural contemplation,—have not been too much the exclusive preoccupation of souls consecrated to God and to the things of His Kingdom; while the rest of mankind was abandoned to the law of immediate, practical success and the will to power. If a new age of Christian civilization should dawn, it is probable that the law of contemplation superabounding in action would overflow in some way into the secular and temporal order. It will thus be an age of the sanctification of the profane.

As I have said at the beginning of this chapter, the debate between action and contemplation is particularly important to this continent. Is it not a universally repeated commonplace that America is the land par excellence of pragmatism and of the great undertakings of human activity? There is truth in this, as in most commonplaces. Whitman celebrates the pioneers in a manner which is certainly characteristic of the American soul. But, in my opinion, there are in America great reserves and possibilities for contemplation. The activism which is manifested here assumes in many cases the aspect of a remedy against despair. I think that this activism itself masks a certain hidden aspiration to contemplation. To my mind, if in American civilization certain elements are causing complaints or criticisms, those elements proceed definitely from a repression of the desire, natural in mankind, for the active repose of the soul breathing what is eternal. In many unhappy creatures, good but wrongly directed, nervous breakdown is the price of such repression. On the other hand, the tendency, natural in this country, to undertake great things, to have confidence, to be moved by large idealistic feelings, may be considered, without great risk of error, as disguising that desire and aspiration of which I spoke.

To wish paradise on earth is stark naïveté. But it is surely better than not to wish any paradise at all. To aspire to paradise is man's grandeur; and how should I aspire to paradise except by beginning to realize paradise here below? The question is to know what paradise is. Paradise consists, as St. Augustine says, in the joy of the Truth. Contemplation is paradise on earth, a crucified paradise.

The cult of action is not specifically American. It is a European idea, an idea of post-Renaissance and post-Reformation Europe. What may mislead us in this matter, so it seems to me, is that the New Continent, with terrible loyalty, has taken some of the Old World's ideas, transplanted in virgin soil, and carried them to their limits. When in America some few come to realize better the value of contemplative activity, its superiority and fecundity, I believe that the possibilities I have spoken of will manifest themselves, at least in a small way, but forcefully enough

gradually to modify the general scheme of values. Then this country will give some of its generosity, good will, confidence in the future and courage, to things contemplative, to contemplation overflowing in action. And this is one of the reasons why even if a moment of general catastrophe should befall civilization, I would still not despair of civilization.

# The Moral Order\*

## I. MORAL GOOD AND EVIL

30. *There is a Real, Intrinsic Distinction between Moral Good and Moral Evil.*

1. *Argument drawn from consciousness.* Certain things come before our consciousness as good and right, other things as bad and wrong, and this distinction imposes itself upon us with irresistible evidence. Similarly there are certain judgments about good and evil, justice and injustice, virtue and vice, the truth of which it is impossible to contest with any sincerity.

2. *Inductive argument.* Induction confirms the data of consciousness. The distinction between good and evil is always presented before us with such notes of necessity, universality and persistence—and this in spite of the contrary solicitations of passions and interests—that a sufficient reason for it can only be found in the objective manifestation of truth, or better, of compelling truths which are anterior to every code of merely human origin and independent of all contingent circumstances. Hence, short of denying the natural capacity of human reason to know the truth, and of thus logically professing scepticism, we must admit that the distinction between moral good and evil is founded on the very nature of things.

No doubt the application of moral principles to particular facts allows of divergencies and variations more or less considerable; but the root ideas of good and evil, of just and unjust, of lawful and unlawful, are the same at all times and among all peoples.

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\* From *Ethics*, by (Desiré Félicien François Joseph) Cardinal Mercier, Volume II of *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*; Part I, Chapter 3. Copyright, 1917, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company. Used by permission of Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd.

3. *Deductive argument.* Another argument may be drawn from the study of human nature itself. The good or right is by definition that which leads to the end of man's rational nature; conversely, we call wrong whatever is in opposition to the end of human nature. Now there must be some objects suitable, others unsuitable to human nature. Therefore between moral good and evil there must be a distinction which is founded on the nature of things.

31. *The Distinction between the Goodness and Badness of Human Actions is not explained in its Ultimate Analysis by any Extrinsic or Positive Influence, whether Human or even Divine.*

Many writers think that purely positive influences can account for this distinction, such as traditional prepossessions, social conventions or laws, or an absolutely free decree of God. Montaigne thought it enough to appeal to the prejudices created by education. Hobbes and Rousseau both made the civil law the foundation of morality. It would seem that Puffendorf, and before him Descartes, attributed to God's free will the power of creating the distinction made by us between moral good and evil.

In the first place, this distinction is not explained by any human influence. (a) The nature of good and evil, as presented to our consciousness and reproduced in the invincible convictions of the human race, has already shown that the distinction between the rightness and wrongness of certain actions is independent of all positive intervention or system of government. A cause that is local, particular and changing cannot explain an effect that is universal, general and constant. (b) It is useless to have recourse with Hobbes to the despotic commands of an absolute monarch, or with Rousseau to the exigencies of a social contract; such commands or contracts do not themselves possess, *ex hypothesi*, an intrinsic goodness and consequently cannot communicate it to the acts which it is their purpose to regulate.

In the second place, this distinction does not rest on a free decree of the Divine Will. The opinion that makes the distinction between good and evil depend on the free will of God leads to inadmissible consequences: (a) God might then make blasphemy, perjury, violation of contracts, and the like obligatory upon us. (b) Whatever is morally good would be obligatory, and even heroism would be a duty forced upon us. (c) If all moral law owed its origin to a free act of the sovereign will of God, a positive revelation would be necessary for us to discern the difference between good and evil. Such conclusions as these condemn the principle from which they logically follow.

## II. THE FOUNDATION OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORAL GOOD AND EVIL

32. *The Distinction between Good and Evil is founded on the Natural Conformity or Non-conformity of our Acts with our Supreme End.*

If the good is what answers to the natural tendency of a being, the moral good is what answers to the tendency of the rational nature of man and is that by which he perfects himself. Now the end of our rational nature is the knowledge and love of God together with the joy that results from this knowledge and love. Hence a morally good act is one which, whether directly or indirectly, helps us to know and love God, and in so doing contributes to the perfecting of our rational nature; similarly, a thing is morally good which is the object of a morally good act.

Moral evil, on the other hand, is what is in opposition to the end of our rational nature; it is the act which is prejudicial to the perfecting of our rational nature, or it is the object of this act; in its ultimate analysis it is whatever withdraws us from the perfect knowledge and love of the Supreme Being and from the happiness which these acts should bring us.

What, as a matter of fact, is the criterion by which we judge of the intrinsic morality of an action? Do we not always find it in the connexion of this action with the perfection of our nature or, what comes to the same, in its connexion with our supreme end? We condemn drunkenness and licentiousness, we look upon them as vices, because they degrade and disgrace us. We esteem temperance and chastity as true virtues, because they ennoble us and answer to the demands of our dignity as men.

33. *Corollary.*

Every good act is, at least implicitly or virtually, an act which contributes to the glory of God, just as every bad act is an offence against the majesty of God. Hence, St. Thomas teaches that every morally bad act, inasmuch as it cannot be referred to God, the last end of creation, is blame-worthy in His sight.

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## III. THE MORAL LAW

40. *Man is Subject to a Natural Law, that is, to an Inclination which habitually disposes him to know and will the End of his Rational Nature and what conduces to it, as well as to discern and reject what is contrary to it.*

1. *Argument from analogy.* Every being in this world has within it an inclination towards some end, and its law is to tend towards it. Man is no exception; he is likewise set towards his end. This end directs human

activity by influencing the reason and the will; and this influence exercised by the end upon the higher faculties of man is called the natural law. Therefore man is under a natural law.

2. *Argument from consciousness.* Man is conscious that a higher attraction carries him on towards the good which his reason points out to him, and he yields to evil solicitation only by overcoming interior resistance and after self-reproach for his own weakness: hence the satisfaction that is given by the practice of virtue and the shame that follows an evil act.

3. *Argument drawn from Providence.* Before creating the world by His free act, God must have set Himself some end in view and have chosen means adapted to its realization. Being infinitely wise, He could not be deceived with regard to the relation of proportion between a creature and its end; being infinitely holy, He approved and willed this necessary relation; being infinitely powerful, He was able to bring it into being according to the capacity of the respective natures of the agents He created. God has therefore given to created beings an impulse towards their ends, a principle which directs their activities in conformity with the eternal designs of His Providence; in a word, He must have implanted in each created agent the natural law. Now this natural law must be in harmony with the constitution of the subject under its sway. The natural law implanted in man's nature, which is rational and free, cannot be, then, a fatalistic law; on the contrary, it must consist in an intellectual tendency to form some principles of reason with certainty, and in an impulse which, without forcing or necessarily determining the will, inclines it towards the real good apprehended by the intellect.

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#### 43. *Foundation of Moral Obligation.*

In the opinion of most Christian moralists since the time of Kant, moral duty admits of only one possible explanation, namely the authority of God, the supreme Legislator of the moral order as He is of the physical. If there is a difference of opinion it is only on the question whether it is His essence, His intellect, His will, or His intellect and will combined, which gives the obligatory character to the moral law.

What are the arguments on which this interpretation of moral duty is based?—There cannot be law, we are reminded, without a lawgiver, nor a command without a superior who has the power and right to issue commands to his subjects. Now God alone has the power and right to issue commands that have a universal and absolute value; in God alone then do we find the principle of moral obligation. And secondly, the theological interpretation of moral duty is the only one which separates us from the



theories of 'the autonomy of reason' and 'independent morality' as put forward by the rationalistic schools.

However, it would seem to us, this necessity of choosing between the theological morality, as explained above, and autonomous morality is in no way forced upon us. Consequently we prefer to follow unreservedly the opinion of St. Thomas which makes the moral obligation rest on a double foundation—immediately, upon human nature; remotely, upon the intelligence of God who rules all things by His Providence.

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*45. The Ultimate Reason of the Distinction between Good and Evil, and consequently of Moral Obligation and Law, is found in God; it is formally in the Practical Reason of Him who has destined Beings to a Necessary Last End or, more briefly, in the Practical Reason of Providence.*

God knows His own essence. He knows Himself as a necessary good. He accordingly knows how the beings He has power to create are related to His Essential goodness, and sees that every created being must of necessity have for its end the Divine Being, who alone is the necessary and infinite good.

If God wills creatures to exist distinct from Himself, it is impossible that He should not perceive by His practical reason the necessary relations of subordination which must exist between these creatures and the essential goodness of the Divine Being. These relations as conceived by the Divine Mind are 'the eternal law.' Such is the ultimate foundation of the distinction between good and evil, and of the natural law and of moral obligation.



# Ethical Relativity

"THERE IS nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." When Shakespeare has Hamlet utter these famous words, his topic is not specifically (at that moment) matters of morals. The statement, however, brief as it is, may be taken as a fairly adequate summary of a view of morality commonly given the label of Ethical Relativism, or Ethical Relativity: Thinking an action or the end of an action to be right, wrong, good or bad, makes it that.

There are a number of reasons why Ethical Relativity seems an appealing and not implausible way of viewing morals. One reason for its appeal is that it might enable one to live relatively comfortably with the moral censure of one's fellow-citizens. And, as St. Paul tells us, "happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." (*Romans* 14: 22)

The wide diversity in moral practice of which modern anthropologists have made us aware—from that of the Iglulik Eskimos to what is involved in "coming of age in Samoa"—may be cited as another reason for the apparent plausibility of Ethical Relativism. Not that such wide diversity in moral practice necessarily implies the truth of Ethical Relativism, but the moral theorist, when confronted with such diversity, may quickly despair of finding a common denominator for the numerous moral codes.

In the following selections, some of the implications of Ethical Relativism are developed and examined.

*SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING*

ASCH, S. E. *Social Psychology*

BENEDICT, RUTH. *Patterns of Culture*

GINSBERG, MORRIS. *On the Diversity of Morals*

HERSKOVITS, MELVILLE J. *Man and His Works*

STACE, W. T. *The Concept of Morals*

WESTERMARCK, EDWARD. *Ethical Relativity*

# Folkways\*

## 1. DEFINITION AND MODE OF ORIGIN OF THE FOLKWAYS

If we put together all that we have learned from anthropology and ethnography about primitive men and primitive society, we perceive that the first task of life is to live. Men begin with acts, not with thoughts. Every moment brings necessities which must be satisfied at once. Need was the first experience, and it was followed at once by a blundering effort to satisfy it. It is generally taken for granted that men inherited some guiding instincts from their beast ancestry, and it may be true, although it has never been proved. If there were such inheritances, they controlled and aided the first efforts to satisfy needs. Analogy makes it easy to assume that the ways of beasts had produced channels of habit and predisposition along which dexterities and other psychophysical activities would run easily. Experiments with newborn animals show that in the absence of any experience of the relation of means to ends, efforts to satisfy needs are clumsy and blundering. The method is that of trial and failure, which produces repeated pain, loss, and disappointments. Nevertheless, it is a method of rude experiment and selection. The earliest efforts of men were of this kind. Need was the impelling force. Pleasure and pain, on the one side and the other, were the rude constraints which defined the line on which efforts must proceed. The ability to distinguish between pleasure and pain is the only psychical power which is to be assumed. Thus ways of doing things were selected, which were expedient. They answered the purpose better than other ways, or with less toil and pain. Along the course on which efforts were compelled to go, habit, routine, and skill were developed. The struggle to maintain existence was

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\* From the book of the same title by William Graham Sumner, pp. 2-8, 11-12, 19-20, 27-31, 36, 58-60, 463-464, 521-522. Dover Publications, Inc., New York 14, New York.

carried on, not individually, but in groups. Each profited by the other's experience; hence there was concurrence towards that which proved to be most expedient. All at last adopted the same way for the same purpose; hence the ways turned into customs and became mass phenomena. Instincts were developed in connection with them. In this way folkways arise. The young learn them by tradition, imitation, and authority. The folkways, at a time, provide for all the needs of life then and there. They are uniform, universal in the group, imperative, and invariable. As time goes on, the folkways become more and more arbitrary, positive, and imperative. If asked why they act in a certain way in certain cases, primitive people always answer that it is because they and their ancestors always have done so. A sanction also arises from ghost fear. The ghosts of ancestors would be angry if the living should change the ancient folkways (see sec. 6).

## 2. THE FOLKWAYS ARE A SOCIETAL FORCE

The operation by which folkways are produced consists in the frequent repetition of petty acts, often by great numbers acting in concert or, at least, acting in the same way when face to face with the same need. The immediate motive is interest. It produces habit in the individual and custom in the group. It is, therefore, in the highest degree original and primitive. By habit and custom it exerts a strain on every individual within its range; therefore it rises to a societal force to which great classes of societal phenomena are due. Its earliest stages, its course, and laws may be studied; also its influence on individuals and their reaction on it. It is our present purpose so to study it. We have to recognize it as one of the chief forces by which a society is made to be what it is. Out of the unconscious experiment which every repetition of the ways includes, there issues pleasure or pain, and then, so far as the men are capable of reflection, convictions that the ways are conducive to societal welfare. These two experiences are not the same. The most uncivilized men, both in the food quest and in war, do things which are painful, but which have been found to be expedient. Perhaps these cases teach the sense of social welfare better than those which are pleasurable and favorable to welfare. The former cases call for some intelligent reflection on experience. When this conviction as to the relation to welfare is added to the folkways they are converted into mores, and, by virtue of the philosophical and ethical element added to them, they win utility and importance and become the source of the science and the art of living.

## 3. FOLKWAYS ARE MADE UNCONSCIOUSLY

It is of the first importance to notice that, from the first acts by which men try to satisfy needs, each act stands by itself, and looks no further

than the immediate satisfaction. From recurrent needs arise habits for the individual and customs for the group, but these results are consequences which were never conscious, and never foreseen or intended. They are not noticed until they have long existed, and it is still longer before they are appreciated. Another long time must pass, and a higher stage of mental development must be reached, before they can be used as a basis from which to deduce rules for meeting, in the future, problems whose pressure can be foreseen. The folkways, therefore, are not creations of human purpose and wit. They are like products of natural forces which men unconsciously set in operation, or they are like the instinctive ways of animals, which are developed out of experience, which reach a final form of maximum adaptation to an interest, which are handed down by tradition and admit of no exception or variation, yet change to meet new conditions, still within the same limited methods, and without rational reflection or purpose. From this it results that all the life of human beings, in all ages and stages of culture, is primarily controlled by a vast mass of folkways handed down from the earliest existence of the race, having the nature of the ways of other animals, only the topmost layers of which are subject to change and control, and have been somewhat modified by human philosophy, ethics, and religion, or by other acts of intelligent reflection. We are told of savages that "It is difficult to exhaust the customs and small ceremonial usages of a savage people. Custom regulates the whole of a man's actions,—his bathing, washing, cutting his hair, eating, drinking, and fasting. From his cradle to his grave he is the slave of ancient usage. In his life there is nothing free, nothing original, nothing spontaneous, no progress towards a higher and better life, and no attempt to improve his condition, mentally, morally, or spiritually."<sup>1</sup> All men act in this way with only a little wider margin of voluntary variation.

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## 5. THE STRAIN OF IMPROVEMENT AND CONSISTENCY

The folkways, being ways of satisfying needs, have succeeded more or less well, and therefore have produced more or less pleasure or pain. Their quality always consisted in their adaptation to the purpose. If they were imperfectly adapted and unsuccessful, they produced pain, which drove men on to learn better. The folkways are, therefore, (1) subject to a strain of improvement towards better adaptation of means to ends, as long as the adaptation is so imperfect that pain is produced. They are also (2) subject to a strain of consistency with each other, because they all answer their several purposes with less friction and

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<sup>1</sup> JAI, XX, 140.

antagonism when they coöperate and support each other. The forms of industry, the forms of the family, the notions of property, the constructions of rights, and the types of religion show the strain of consistency with each other through the whole history of civilization. The two great cultural divisions of the human race are the oriental and the occidental. Each is consistent throughout; each has its own philosophy and spirit; they are separated from top to bottom by different mores, different standpoint, different ways, and different notions of what societal arrangements are advantageous. In their contrast they keep before our minds the possible range of divergence in the solution of the great problems of human life, and in the views of earthly existence by which life policy may be controlled. If two planets were joined in one, their inhabitants could not differ more widely as to what things are best worth seeking, or what ways are most expedient for well living.

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## 7. ALL ORIGINS ARE LOST IN MYSTERY

No objection can lie against this postulate about the way in which folkways began, on account of the element of inference in it. All origins are lost in mystery, and it seems vain to hope that from any origin the veil of mystery will ever be raised. We go up the stream of history to the utmost point for which we have evidence of its course. Then we are forced to reach out into the darkness upon the line of direction marked by the remotest course of the historic stream. This is the way in which we have to act in regard to the origin of capital, language, the family, the state, religion, and rights. We never can hope to see the beginning of any one of these things. Use and wont are products and results. They had antecedents. We never can find or see the first member of the series. It is only by analysis and inference that we can form any conception of the "beginning" which we are always so eager to find.

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## 12. TRADITION AND ITS RESTRAINTS

It is evident that the "ways" of the older and more experienced members of a society deserve great authority in any primitive group. We find that this rational authority leads to customs of deference and to etiquette in favor of the old. The old in turn cling stubbornly to tradition and to the example of their own predecessors. Thus tradition and custom become intertwined and are a strong coercion which directs the society upon fixed lines, and strangles liberty. Children see their parents always yield



to the same custom and obey the same persons. They see that the elders are allowed to do all the talking, and that if an outsider enters, he is saluted by those who are at home according to rank and in fixed order. All this becomes rules for children, and helps to give to all primitive customs their stereotyped formality. "The fixed ways of looking at things which are inculcated by education and tribal discipline, are the precipitate of an old cultural development, and in their continued operation they are the moral anchor of the Indian, although they are also the fetters which restrain his individual will."<sup>1</sup>

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## 23. PROCESS OF MAKING FOLKWAYS

Although we may see the process of making folkways going on all the time, the analysis of the process is very difficult. It appears as if there was a "mind" in the crowd which was different from the minds of the individuals which compose it. Indeed some have adopted such a doctrine. By autosuggestion the stronger minds produce ideas which when set afloat pass by suggestion from mind to mind. Acts which are consonant with the ideas are imitated. There is a give and take between man and man. This process is one of development. New suggestions come in at point after point. They are carried out. They combine with what existed already. Every new step increases the number of points upon which other minds may seize. It seems to be by this process that great inventions are produced. Knowledge has been won and extended by it. It seems as if the crowd had a mystic power in it greater than the sum of the powers of its members. It is sufficient, however, to explain this, to notice that there is a coöperation and constant suggestion which is highly productive when it operates in a crowd, because it draws out latent power, concentrates what would otherwise be scattered, verifies and corrects what has been taken up, eliminates error, and constructs by combination. Hence the gain from the collective operation is fully accounted for, and the theories of *Völkerpsychologie* are to be rejected as superfluous. Out of the process which has been described have come the folkways during the whole history of civilization.

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## 30. HOW "TRUE" AND "RIGHT" ARE FOUND

If a savage puts his hand too near the fire, he suffers pain and draws it back. He knows nothing of the laws of the radiation of heat, but his instinctive action conforms to that law as if he did know it. If he wants

<sup>1</sup> *Globus*, LXXXVII, 128.

to catch an animal for food, he must study its habits and prepare a device adjusted to those habits. If it fails, he must try again, until his observation is "true" and his device is "right." All the practical and direct element in the folkways seems to be due to common sense, natural reason, intuition, or some other original mental endowment. It seems rational (or rationalistic) and utilitarian. Often in the mythologies this ultimate rational element was ascribed to the teaching of a god or a culture hero. In modern mythology it is accounted for as "natural."

Although the ways adopted must always be really "true" and "right" in relation to facts, for otherwise they could not answer their purpose, such is not the primitive notion of true and right.

### 31. THE FOLKWAYS ARE "RIGHT." RIGHTS. MORALS

The folkways are the "right" ways to satisfy all interests, because they are traditional, and exist in fact. They extend over the whole of life. There is a right way to catch game, to win a wife, to make one's self appear, to cure disease, to honor ghosts, to treat comrades or strangers, to behave when a child is born, on the warpath, in council, and so on in all cases which can arise. The ways are defined on the negative side, that is, by taboos. The "right" way is the way which the ancestors used and which has been handed down. The tradition is its own warrant. It is not held subject to verification by experience. The notion of right is in the folkways. It is not outside of them, of independent origin, and brought to them to test them. In the folkways, whatever is, is right. This is because they are traditional, and therefore contain in themselves the authority of the ancestral ghosts. When we come to the folkways we are at the end of our analysis. The notion of right and ought is the same in regard to all the folkways, but the degree of it varies with the importance of the interest at stake. The obligation of conformable and coöperative action is far greater under ghost fear and war than in other matters, and the social sanctions are severer, because group interests are supposed to be at stake. Some usages contain only a slight element of right and ought. It may well be believed that notions of right and duty, and of social welfare, were first developed in connection with ghost fear and other-worldliness, and therefore that, in that field also, folkways were first raised to mores. "Rights" are the rules of mutual give and take in the competition of life which are imposed on comrades in the in-group, in order that the peace may prevail there which is essential to the group strength. Therefore rights can never be "natural" or "God-given," or absolute in any sense. The morality of a group at a time is the sum of the taboos and prescriptions in the folkways by which right conduct is defined. Therefore morals can never be intuitive. They are historical, institutional, and empirical.

World philosophy, life policy, right, rights, and morality are all products of the folkways. They are reflections on, and generalizations from, the experience of pleasure and pain which is won in efforts to carry on the struggle for existence under actual life conditions. The generalizations are very crude and vague in their germinal forms. They are all embodied in folklore, and all our philosophy and science have been developed out of them.

### 32. THE FOLKWAYS ARE "TRUE"

The folkways are necessarily "true" with respect to some world philosophy. Pain forced men to think. The ills of life imposed reflection and taught forethought. Mental processes were irksome and were not undertaken until painful experience made them unavoidable.<sup>1</sup> With great unanimity all over the globe primitive men followed the same line of thought. The dead were believed to live on as ghosts in another world just like this one. The ghosts had just the same needs, tastes, passions, etc., as the living men had had. These transcendental notions were the beginning of the mental outfit of mankind. They are articles of faith, not rational convictions. The living had duties to the ghosts, and the ghosts had rights; they also had power to enforce their rights. It behooved the living therefore to learn how to deal with ghosts. Here we have a complete world philosophy and a life policy deduced from it. When pain, loss, and ill were experienced and the question was provoked, Who did this to us? the world philosophy furnished the answer. When the painful experience forced the question, Why are the ghosts angry and what must we do to appease them? the "right" answer was the one which fitted into the philosophy of ghost fear. All acts were therefore constrained and trained into the forms of the world philosophy by ghost fear, ancestral authority, taboos, and habit. The habits and customs created a practical philosophy of welfare, and they confirmed and developed the religious theories of goblinism.

### 33. RELATION OF WORLD PHILOSOPHY AND FOLKWAYS

It is quite impossible for us to disentangle the elements of philosophy and custom, so as to determine priority and the causative position of either. Our best judgment is that the mystic philosophy is regulative, not creative, in its relation to the folkways. They reacted upon each other. The faith in the world philosophy drew lines outside of which the folkways must not go. Crude and vague notions of societal welfare were formed from the notion of pleasing the ghosts, and from such notions of expe-

<sup>1</sup> Fritsch, *Eingeborenen Südafr.*, 57.

diency as the opinion that, if there were not children enough, there would not be warriors enough, or that, if there were too many children, the food supply would not be adequate. The notion of welfare was an inference and resultant from these mystic and utilitarian generalizations.

#### 34. DEFINITION OF THE MORES

When the elements of truth and right are developed into doctrines of welfare, the folkways are raised to another plane. They then become capable of producing inferences, developing into new forms, and extending their constructive influence over men and society. Then we call them the mores. The mores are the folkways, including the philosophical and ethical generalizations as to societal welfare which are suggested by them, and inherent in them, as they grow.

#### 35. TABOOS

The mores necessarily consist, in a large part, of taboos, which indicate the things which must not be done. In part these are dictated by mystic dread of ghosts who might be offended by certain acts, but they also include such acts as have been found by experience to produce unwelcome results, especially in the food quest, in war, in health, or in increase or decrease of population. These taboos always contain a greater element of philosophy than the positive rules, because the taboos contain reference to a reason, as, for instance, that the act would displease the ghosts. The primitive taboos correspond to the fact that the life of man is environed by perils. His food quest must be limited by shunning poisonous plants. His appetite must be restrained from excess. His physical strength and health must be guarded from dangers. The taboos carry on the accumulated wisdom of generations, which has almost always been purchased by pain, loss, disease, and death. Other taboos contain inhibitions of what will be injurious to the group. The laws about the sexes, about property, about war, and about ghosts, have this character. They always include some social philosophy. They are both mystic and utilitarian, or compounded of the two.

Taboos may be divided into two classes, (1) protective and (2) destructive. Some of them aim to protect and secure, while others aim to repress or exterminate. Women are subject to some taboos which are directed against them as sources of possible harm or danger to men, and they are subject to other taboos which put them outside of the duties or risks of men. On account of this difference in taboos, taboos act selectively, and thus affect the course of civilization. They contain judgments as to societal welfare.

## 41. INTEGRATION OF THE MORES OF A GROUP OR AGE

In further development of the same interpretation of the phenomena we find that changes in history are primarily due to changes in life conditions. Then the folkways change. Then new philosophies and ethical rules are invented to try to justify the new ways. The whole vast body of modern mores has thus been developed out of the philosophy and ethics of the Middle Ages. So the mores which have been developed to suit the system of great secular states, world commerce, credit institutions, contract wages and rent, emigration to outlying continents, etc., have become the norm for the whole body of usages, manners, ideas, faiths, customs, and institutions which embrace the whole life of a society and characterize an historical epoch. Thus India, Chaldea, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, Modern Times, are cases in which the integration of the mores upon different life conditions produced societal states of complete and distinct individuality (ethos). Within any such societal status the great reason for any phenomenon is that it conforms to the mores of the time and place. Historians have always recognized incidentally the operation of such a determining force. What is now maintained is that it is not incidental or subordinate. It is supreme and controlling. Therefore the scientific discussion of a usage, custom, or institution consists in tracing its relation to the mores, and the discussion of societal crises and changes consists in showing their connection with changes in the life conditions, or with the readjustment of the mores to changes in those conditions.

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## 65. WHAT IS GOODNESS OR BADNESS OF THE MORES

It is most important to notice that, for the people of a time and place, their own mores are always good, or rather that for them there can be no question of the goodness or badness of their mores. The reason is because the standards of good and right are in the mores. If the life conditions change, the traditional folkways may produce pain and loss, or fail to produce the same good as formerly. Then the loss of comfort and ease brings doubt into the judgment of welfare (causing doubt of the pleasure of the gods, or of war power, or of health), and thus disturbs the unconscious philosophy of the mores. Then a later time will pass judgment on the mores. Another society may also pass judgment on the mores. In our literary and historical study of the mores we want to get from them their educational value, which consists in the stimulus or warning as to what is, in its effects, societally good or bad. This may lead us to reject or neglect a phenomenon like infanticide, slavery, or witchcraft, as an old

"abuse" and "evil," or to pass by the crusades as a folly which cannot recur. Such a course would be a great error. Everything in the mores of a time and place must be regarded as justified with regard to that time and place. "Good" mores are those which are well adapted to the situation. "Bad" mores are those which are not so adapted. The mores are not so stereotyped and changeless as might appear, because they are forever moving towards more complete adaptation to conditions and interests, and also towards more complete adjustment to each other. People in mass have never made or kept up a custom in order to hurt their own interests. They have made innumerable errors as to what their interests were and how to satisfy them, but they have always aimed to serve their interests as well as they could. This gives the standpoint for the student of the mores. All things in them come before him on the same plane. They all bring instruction and warning. They all have the same relation to power and welfare. The mistakes in them are component parts of them. We do not study them in order to approve some of them and condemn others. They are all equally worthy of attention from the fact that they existed and were used. The chief object of study in them is their adjustment to interests, their relation to welfare, and their coördination in a harmonious system of life policy. For the men of the time there are no "bad" mores. What is traditional and current is the standard of what ought to be. The masses never raise any question about such things. If a few raise doubts and questions, this proves that the folkways have already begun to lose firmness and the regulative element in the mores has begun to lose authority. This indicates that the folkways are on their way to a new adjustment. The extreme of folly, wickedness, and absurdity in the mores is witch persecutions, but the best men of the seventeenth century had no doubt that witches existed, and that they ought to be burned. The religion, statecraft, jurisprudence, philosophy, and social system of that age all contributed to maintain that belief. It was rather a culmination than a contradiction of the current faiths and convictions, just as the dogma that all men are equal and that one ought to have as much political power in the state as another was the culmination of the political dogmatism and social philosophy of the nineteenth century. Hence our judgments of the good or evil consequences of folkways are to be kept separate from our study of the historical phenomena of them, and of their strength and the reasons for it. The judgments have their place in plans and doctrines for the future, not in a retrospect.

## 66. MORE EXACT DEFINITION OF THE MORES

We may now formulate a more complete definition of the mores. They are the ways of doing things which are current in a society to satisfy

human needs and desires, together with the faiths, notions, codes, and standards of well living which inhere in those ways, having a genetic connection with them. By virtue of the latter element the mores are traits in the specific character (ethos) of a society or a period. They pervade and control the ways of thinking in all the exigencies of life, returning from the world of abstractions to the world of action, to give guidance and to win revivification. "The mores (*Sitten*) are, before any beginning of reflection, the regulators of the political, social, and religious behavior of the individual. Conscious reflection is the worst enemy of the mores, because mores begin unconsciously and pursue unconscious purposes, which are recognized by reflection often only after long and circuitous processes, and because their expediency often depends on the assumption that they will have general acceptance and currency, uninterfered with by reflection."<sup>1</sup> "The mores are usage in any group, in so far as it, on the one hand, is not the expression or fulfillment of an absolute natural necessity (e.g. eating or sleeping), and, on the other hand, is independent of the arbitrary will of the individual, and is generally accepted as good and proper, appropriate and worthy."<sup>2</sup>

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#### 494. HONOR, SEEMLINESS, COMMON SENSE, CONSCIENCE

Honor, common sense, seemliness, and conscience seem to belong to the individual domain. They are reactions produced in the individual by the societal environment. Honor is the sentiment of what one owes to one's self. It is an individual prerogative, and an ultimate individual standard. Seemliness is conduct which befits one's character and standards. Common sense, in the current view, is a natural gift and universal outfit. As to honor and seemliness, the popular view seems to be that each one has a fountain of inspiration in himself to furnish him with guidance. Conscience might be added as another natural or supernatural "voice," intuition, and part of the original outfit of all human beings as such. If these notions could be verified, and if they proved true, no discussion of them would be in place here, but as to honor it is a well-known and undisputed fact that societies have set codes of honor and standards of it which were arbitrary, irrational, and both individually and socially inexpedient, as ample experiment has proved. These codes have been and are imperative, and they have been accepted and obeyed by great groups of men who, in their own judgment, did not believe them sound. Those codes came out of the folkways of the time and place. Then comes

<sup>1</sup> v. Hartmann, *Phänom. des Sittl. Bewusstseins*, 73.

<sup>2</sup> Lazarus in *Ztsft. für Völkerpsych.*, I, 439.

the question whether it is not always so. Is honor, in any case, anything but the code of one's duty to himself which he has accepted from the group in which he was educated? Family, class, religious sect, school, occupation, enter into the social environment. In every environment there is a standard of honor. When a man thinks that he is acting most independently, on his personal prerogative, he is at best only balancing against each other the different codes in which he has been educated, e.g. that of the trades union against that of the Sunday school, or of the school against that of the family. What we think "natural" and universal, and to which we attribute an objective reality, is the sum of traits whose origin is so remote, and which we share with so many, that we do not know when or how we took them up, and we can remember no rational selection by which we adopted them. The same is true of common sense. It is the stock of ways of looking at things which we acquired unconsciously by suggestion from the environment in which we grew up. Some have more common sense than others, because they are more docile to suggestion, or have been taught to make judgments by people who were strong and wise. Conscience also seems best explained as a sum of principles of action which have in one's character the most original, remote, undisputed, and authoritative position, and to which questions of doubt are habitually referred. If these views are accepted, we have in honor, common sense, and conscience other phenomena of the folkways, and the notions of eternal truths of philosophy or ethics, derived from somewhere outside of men and their struggles to live well under the conditions of earth, must be abandoned as myths.

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[Chapter XV. The Mores Can Make Anything Right and Prevent Condemnation of Anything.]

## 572. MORES DEFINE THE LIMITS WHICH MAKE ANYTHING RIGHT

At every turn we find new evidence that the mores can make anything right. What they do is that they cover a usage in dress, language, behavior, manners, etc., with the mantle of current custom, and give it regulation and limits within which it becomes unquestionable. The limit is generally a limit of toleration. Literature, pictures, exhibitions, celebrations, and festivals are controlled by some undefined, and probably undefinable, standard of decency and propriety, which sets a limit of toleration on the appeals to fun, sensuality, and various prejudices. In regard to all social customs, the mores sanction them by defining them and giving them form. Such regulated customs are etiquette. The regulation by the mores



always gives order and form, and thus surrounds life with limits within which we may and beyond which we may not pursue our interests (e.g. property and marriage). Horseplay and practical jokes have been tolerated, at various times and places, at weddings. They require good-natured toleration, but soon run to excess and may become unendurable. The mores set the limits or define the disapproval. The wedding journey was invented to escape the "jokes." The rice and old shoes will soon be tabooed. The mores fluctuate in their prescriptions. If the limits are too narrow, there is an overflow into vice and abuse, as was proved by seventeenth-century puritanism in England. If the limit is too remote, there is no discipline, and the regulation fails of its purpose. Then a corruption of manners ensues. . . .

W. T. STACE

# The Concept of Morals\*

## ETHICAL RELATIVITY (I)

There is an opinion widely current nowadays in philosophical circles which passes under the name of "ethical relativity." Exactly what this phrase means or implies is certainly far from clear. But unquestionably it stands as a label for the opinions of a group of ethical philosophers whose position is roughly on the extreme left wing among the moral theorizers of the day. And perhaps one may best understand it by placing it in contrast with the opposite kind of extreme view against which, undoubtedly, it has arisen as a protest. For among moral philosophers one may clearly distinguish a left and a right wing. Those of the left wing are the ethical relativists. They are the revolutionaries, the clever young men, the up to date. Those of the right wing we may call the ethical absolutists. They are the conservatives and the old-fashioned.

According to the absolutists there is but one eternally true and valid moral code. This moral code applies with rigid impartiality to all men. What is a duty for me must likewise be a duty for you. And this will be true whether you are an Englishman, a Chinaman, or a Hottentot. If cannibalism is an abomination in England or America, it is an abomination in central Africa, notwithstanding that the African may think otherwise. The fact that he sees nothing wrong in his cannibal practices does not make them for him morally right. They are as much contrary to morality for him as they are for us. The only difference is that he is an ignorant savage who does not know this. There is not one law for one man or race of men, another for another. There is not one moral standard for Europeans, another for Indians, another for Chinese. There is but one

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\* From the book of the same title by W. T. Stace, pp. 1-13 and 61-67. Reprinted by permission of the author.

law, one standard, one morality, for all men. And this standard, this law, is absolute and unvarying.

Moreover, as the one moral law extends its dominion over all the corners of the earth, so too it is not limited in its application by any considerations of time or period. That which is right now was right in the centuries of Greece and Rome, nay, in the very ages of the cave man. That which is evil now was evil then. If slavery is morally wicked today, it was morally wicked among the ancient Athenians, notwithstanding that their greatest men accepted it as a necessary condition of human society. Their opinion did not make slavery a moral good for them. It only showed that they were, in spite of their otherwise noble conceptions, ignorant of what is truly right and good in this matter.

The ethical absolutist recognizes as a fact that moral customs and moral ideas differ from country to country and from age to age. This indeed seems manifest and not to be disputed. We think slavery morally wrong, the Greeks thought it morally unobjectionable. The inhabitants of New Guinea certainly have very different moral ideas from ours. But the fact that the Greeks or the inhabitants of New Guinea think something right does not make it right, even for them. Nor does the fact that we think the same things wrong make them wrong. They are *in themselves* either right or wrong. What we have to do is to discover which they are. What anyone thinks makes no difference. It is here just as it is in matters of physical science. We believe the earth to be a globe. Our ancestors may have thought it flat. This does not show that it *was* flat, and is *now* a globe. What it shows is that men having in other ages been ignorant about the shape of the earth have now learned the truth. So if the Greeks thought slavery morally legitimate, this does not indicate that it was for them and in that age morally legitimate, but rather that they were ignorant of the truth of the matter.

The ethical absolutist is not indeed committed to the opinion that his own, or our own, moral code is the true one. Theoretically at least he might hold that slavery is ethically justifiable, that the Greeks knew better than we do about this, that ignorance of the true morality lies with us and not with them. All that he is actually committed to is the opinion that, whatever the true moral code may be, it is always the same for all men in all ages. His view is not at all inconsistent with the belief that humanity has still much to learn in moral matters. If anyone were to assert that in five hundred years the moral conceptions of the present day will appear as barbarous to the people of that age as the moral conceptions of the middle ages appear to us now, he need not deny it. If anyone were to assert that the ethics of Christianity are by no means final, and will be superseded in future ages by vastly nobler moral ideals, he need not deny

this either. For it is of the essence of his creed to believe that morality is in some sense objective, not man-made, not produced by human opinion; that its principles are real truths about which men have to learn—just as they have to learn about the shape of the world—about which they may have been ignorant in the past, and about which therefore they may well be ignorant now.

Thus although absolutism is conservative in the sense that it is regarded by the more daring spirits as an out of date opinion, it is not necessarily conservative in the sense of being committed to the blind support of existing moral ideas and institutions. If ethical absolutists are sometimes conservative in this sense too, that is their personal affair. Such conservatism is accidental, not essential to the absolutist's creed. There is no logical reason, in the nature of the case, why an absolutist should not be a communist, an anarchist, a surrealist, or an upholder of free love. The fact that he is usually none of these things may be accounted for in various ways. But it has nothing to do with the sheer logic of his ethical position. The sole opinion to which he is committed is that whatever is morally right (or wrong)—be it free love or monogamy or slavery or cannibalism or vegetarianism—is morally right (or wrong) for all men at all times.

Usually the absolutist goes further than this. He often maintains, not merely that the moral law is the same for all the men on this planet—which is, after all, a tiny speck in space—but that in some way or in some sense it has application everywhere in the universe. He may express himself by saying that it applies to all "rational beings"—which would apparently include angels and the men on Mars (if they are rational). He is apt to think that the moral law is a part of the fundamental structure of the universe. But with this aspect of absolutism we need not, at the moment, concern ourselves. At present we may think of it as being simply the opinion that there is a single moral standard for all human beings.

This brief and rough sketch of ethical absolutism is intended merely to form a background against which we may the more clearly indicate, by way of contrast, the theory of ethical relativity. Up to the present, therefore, I have not given any of the reasons which the absolutist can urge in favour of his case. It is sufficient for my purpose at the moment to state *what* he believes, without going into the question of *why* he believes it. But before proceeding to our next step—the explanation of ethical relativity—I think it will be helpful to indicate some of the historical causes (as distinguished from logical reasons) which have helped in the past to render absolutism a plausible interpretation of morality as understood by European peoples.

Our civilization is a Christian civilization. It has grown up, during nearly two thousand years, upon the soil of Christian monotheism. In

this soil our whole outlook upon life, and consequently all our moral ideas, have their roots. They have been moulded by this influence. The wave of religious scepticism which, during the last half century, has swept over us, has altered this fact scarcely at all. The moral ideas even of those who most violently reject the dogmas of Christianity with their intellects are still Christian ideas. This will probably remain true for many centuries even if Christian theology, as a set of intellectual beliefs, comes to be wholly rejected by every educated person. It will probably remain true so long as our civilization lasts. A child cannot, by changing in later life his intellectual creed, strip himself of the early formative moral influences of his childhood, though he can no doubt modify their results in various minor ways. With the outlook on life which was instilled into him in his early days he, in large measure, lives and dies. So it is with a civilization. And our civilization, whatever religious or irreligious views it may come to hold or reject, can hardly escape within its lifetime the moulding influences of its Christian origin. Now ethical absolutism was, in its central ideas, the product of Christian theology.

The connection is not difficult to detect. For morality has been conceived, during the Christian dispensation, as issuing from the will of God. That indeed was its single and all-sufficient source. There would be no point, for the naïve believer in the faith, in the philosopher's questions regarding the foundations of morality and the basis of moral obligation. Even to ask such questions is a mark of incipient religious scepticism. For the true believer the author of the moral law is God. What pleases God, what God commands—that is the definition of right. What displeases God, what he forbids—that is the definition of wrong. Now there is, for the Christian monotheist, only one God ruling over the entire universe. And this God is rational, self-consistent. He does not act upon whims. Consequently his will and his commands must be the same everywhere. They will be unvarying for all peoples and in all ages. If the heathen have other moral ideas than ours—inferior ideas—that can only be because they live in ignorance of the true God. If they knew God and his commands, their ethical precepts would be the same as ours.

Polytheistic creeds may well tolerate a number of diverse moral codes. For the God of the western hemisphere might have different views from those entertained by the God of the eastern hemisphere. And the God of the north might issue to his worshippers commands at variance with the commands issued to other peoples by the God of the south. But a monotheistic religion implies a single universal and absolute morality.

This explains why ethical absolutism, until very recently, was not only believed by philosophers but *taken for granted without any argument*. The ideas of philosophers, like the ideas of everyone else, are largely moulded

by the civilizations in which they live. Their philosophies are largely attempts to state in abstract terms and in self-consistent language the stock of ideas which they have breathed in from the atmosphere of their social environment. This accounts for the large number of so-called "unrecognized presuppositions" with which systems of philosophy always abound. These presuppositions are simply the ideas which the authors of the systems have breathed in with the intellectual atmospheres by which they happen to be surrounded—which they have taken over therefore as a matter of course, without argument, without criticism, without even a suspicion that they might be false.

It is not therefore at all surprising to find that Immanuel Kant, writing in the latter half of the eighteenth century, not only took the tenets of ethical absolutism for granted, but evidently considered that no instructed person would dispute them. It is a noticeable feature of his ethical philosophy that he gives no reasons whatever to support his belief in the existence of a universally valid moral law. He assumes as a matter of course that his readers will accept this view. And he proceeds at once to enquire what is the metaphysical foundation of the universal moral law. That alone is what interests him. *Assuming* that there does exist such a law, how, he asks, can this be the case, and what, in the way of transcendental truth, does it imply? It never occurs to him to reflect that any philosopher who should choose to question his fundamental assumption could outflank his whole ethical position; and that if this assumption should prove false his entire moral philosophy would fall to the ground like a pack of cards.

We can now turn to the consideration of ethical relativity which is the proper subject of this chapter. The revolt of the relativists against absolutism is, I believe, part and parcel of the general revolutionary tendency of our times. In particular it is a result of the decay of belief in the dogmas of orthodox religion. Belief in absolutism was supported, as we have seen, by belief in Christian monotheism. And now that, in an age of widespread religious scepticism, that support is withdrawn, absolutism tends to collapse. Revolutionary movements are as a rule, at any rate in their first onset, purely negative. They attack and destroy. And ethical relativity is, in its essence, a purely negative creed. It is simply a denial of ethical absolutism. That is why the best way of explaining it is to begin by explaining ethical absolutism. If we understand that what the latter asserts the former denies, then we understand ethical relativity.

Any ethical position which denies that there is a single moral standard which is equally applicable to all men at all times may fairly be called a species of ethical relativity. There is not, the relativist asserts, merely one moral law, one code, one standard. There are many moral laws,

codes, standards. What morality ordains in one place or age may be quite different from what morality ordains in another place or age. The moral code of Chinamen is quite different from that of Europeans, that of African savages quite different from both. Any morality, therefore, is relative to the age, the place, and the circumstances in which it is found. It is in no sense absolute.

This does not mean merely—as one might at first sight be inclined to suppose—that the very same kind of action which is *thought* right in one country and period may be *thought* wrong in another. This would be a mere platitude, the truth of which everyone would have to admit. Even the absolutist would admit this—would even wish to emphasize it—since he is well aware that different peoples have different sets of moral ideas, and his whole point is that some of these sets of ideas are false. What the relativist means to assert is, not this platitude, but that the very same kind of action which *is* right in one country and period may *be* wrong in another. And this, far from being a platitude, is a very startling assertion.

It is very important to grasp thoroughly the difference between the two ideas. For there is reason to think that many minds tend to find ethical relativity attractive because they fail to keep them clearly apart. It is so very obvious that moral ideas differ from country to country and from age to age. And it is so very easy, if you are mentally lazy, to suppose that to say this means the same as to say that no universal moral standard exists,—or in other words that it implies ethical relativity. We fail to see that the word “standard” is used in two different senses. It is perfectly true that, in one sense, there are many variable moral standards. We speak of judging a man by the standard of his time. And this implies that different times have different standards. And this, of course, is quite true. But when the word “standard” is used in this sense it means simply the set of moral ideas current during the period in question. It means what people *think* right, whether as a matter of fact it *is* right or not. On the other hand when the absolutist asserts that there exists a single universal moral “standard,” he is not using the word in this sense at all. He means by “standard” what *is* right as distinct from what people merely think right. His point is that although what people think right varies in different countries and periods, yet what actually is right is everywhere and always the same. And it follows that when the ethical relativist disputes the position of the absolutist and denies that any universal moral standard exists he too means by “standard” what actually is right. But it is exceedingly easy, if we are not careful, to slip loosely from using the word in the first sense to using it in the second sense; and to suppose that the variability of moral beliefs is the same thing as the variability of what really is moral. And unless we keep

the two senses of the word "standard" distinct, we are likely to think the creed of ethical relativity much more plausible than it actually is.

The genuine relativist, then, does not merely mean that Chinamen may think right what Frenchmen think wrong. He means that what *is* wrong for the Frenchman may *be* right for the Chinaman. And if one enquires how, in those circumstances, one is to know what actually is right in China or in France, the answer comes quite glibly. What is right in China is the same as what people think right in China; and what is right in France is the same as what people think right in France. So that, if you want to know what is moral in any particular country or age all you have to do is to ascertain what are the moral ideas current in that age or country. Those ideas are, *for that age or country*, right. Thus what is morally right is identified with what is thought to be morally right, and the distinction which we made above between these two is simply denied. To put the same thing in another way, it is denied that there can be or ought to be any distinction between the two senses of the word "standard." There is only one kind of standard of right and wrong, namely, the moral ideas current in any particular age or country.

Moral right *means* what people think morally right. It has no other meaning. What Frenchmen think right is, therefore, right *for Frenchmen*. And evidently one must conclude—though I am not aware that relativists are anxious to draw one's attention to such unsavoury but yet absolutely necessary conclusions from their creed—that cannibalism is right for people who believe in it, that human sacrifice is right for those races which practice it, and that burning widows alive was right for Hindus until the British stepped in and compelled the Hindus to behave immorally by allowing their widows to remain alive.

When it is said that, according to the ethical relativist, what is thought right in any social group is right for that group, one must be careful not to misinterpret this. The relativist does not, of course, mean that there actually is an objective moral standard in France and a different objective standard in England, and that French and British opinions respectively give us correct information about these different standards. His point is rather that there are no objectively true moral standards at all. There is no single universal objective standard. Nor are there a variety of local objective standards. All standards are subjective. People's subjective feelings about morality are the only standards which exist.

To sum up. The ethical relativist consistently denies, it would seem, whatever the ethical absolutist asserts. For the absolutist there is a single universal moral standard. For the relativist there is no such standard. There are only local, ephemeral, and variable standards. For the absolutist there are two senses of the word "standard." Standards in the sense of sets



of current moral ideas are relative and changeable. But the standard in the sense of what is actually morally right is absolute and unchanging. For the relativist no such distinction can be made. There is only one meaning of the word standard, namely, that which refers to local and variable sets of moral ideas. Or if it is insisted that the word must be allowed two meanings, then the relativist will say that there is at any rate no actual example of a standard in the absolute sense, and that the word as thus used is an empty name to which nothing in reality corresponds; so that the distinction between the two meanings becomes empty and useless. Finally—though this is merely saying the same thing in another way—the absolutist makes a distinction between what actually is right and what is thought right. The relativist rejects this distinction and identifies what is moral with what is thought moral by certain human beings or groups of human beings.

It is true that the relativist may object to my statement of his case on the ground that it does not specify precisely *who* the human beings are whose thinking makes what is right right and what is wrong wrong; and that he himself would not think of defining right as “that which, people think right”—using the vague word “people” as if morality were determined by what any chance persons, anyone or everyone, happen to think moral. We shall see later that there is a real and incurable ambiguity in the relativist’s position here (and not merely in my statement of it), and that he himself has difficulty in saying who are the “people” whose ideas are to constitute moral standards. But he cannot deny, at any rate, that his creed does identify morality with the subjective thinking of human beings. And that is the only point which I am at present trying to make clear. To *what* human beings he means to refer will be a matter for our future discussion.

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## ETHICAL RELATIVITY (II)

We may now sum up the criticisms which have been made of ethical relativity. According to the anti-relativist, the doctrine of the relativist logically implies:

(1) That all propositions which adjudge the moral standards of one civilization to be better or worse than the moral standards of another civilization are either meaningless or express nothing except the groundless self-satisfaction of the person making the judgment.

(2) That all propositions which adjudge the moral standards of one age to be better or worse than those of another age are either meaningless or express only self-satisfaction.

(3) That the notion of progress in moral ideals (as distinguished from moral practice) is meaningless.

(4) That it is consequently useless for people to strive for higher moral ideals than those they already possess.

(5) That it is usually meaningless to judge that any one human being is morally better or worse than any other, for example that Jesus was better than Judas. Such judgments are only meaningful if one can be certain that the two persons compared hold exactly the same moral beliefs. In practice one can almost never be certain of this, and one can usually be fairly certain of the opposite.

I think the anti-relativist is right in arguing that ethical relativity does imply these conclusions. What then? Suppose that the relativist accepts these deductions from his creed, and asserts that he believes them to be true. (This is what he is likely to do if he is both bold and honest, though the feebler type of relativist is likely to draw back, to try to pick holes in the logic of the deductions, and to assert that he is being misrepresented.) How can the anti-relativist deal with an antagonist who is audacious enough to take this ground? Now the full answer to this question can only be given, I believe, after a long and difficult analysis. And to give that full answer is, in part, one of the main aims of this book. For the moment, however, the anti-relativist is likely to reply simply that he rejects these conclusions because they revolt his moral sense. These conclusions, he will say, undermine the whole idea of morality. They make moral effort meaningless. They destroy the very roots of human aspiration. They are therefore unacceptable to anyone possessed of the slightest moral *feeling*. That is why I said earlier that the arguments of the anti-relativist are really appeals to feeling, rather than to facts or logic. And, as before stated, the relativist can always reply—if he is sufficiently “tough-minded”—that mere appeals to feeling, whether moral or any other, have no logical cogency and no scientific value.

Now I think we shall have to admit that arguments based upon feelings can never be, either to the scientist or the philosopher, finally and completely satisfactory and sufficient. To be a philosopher is to live the life of reason. Philosophy is rational or it is nothing. It must in the last analysis base its conclusions upon rational considerations. It must stand the test of logic and of facts. To take any other view is to desert the standard of philosophy. And if ethical relativity is to be rejected, if an attempt is to be made to establish any kind of universal morality, other evidence than that afforded by our mere moral feelings will have to be adduced. The position of the anti-relativist, as it has appeared so far in the argument, is therefore very far from being satisfactory.

But to admit all this is not at all to admit that human feelings can be

swept contemptuously aside as if they possessed no value and no relevancy whatever in the search for knowledge. This is far from being true. There are men—and perhaps they are the majority of men—who through insight, intuition, or feeling, attain a view of moral truth which may be hidden from those who rely exclusively upon what is called “scientific method.” I am not proposing to raise again the ancient and foolish quarrel between “intuition” and “reason.” Man does not possess a kind of separate and supernatural “organ” of intuition, a sort of super-eye which enables him to contradict his reason. There are not two kinds of truth standing in opposition to one another. But in the claims of “intuition”—distorted, exaggerated, and fantastic as they have often been—there is at least this element of truth, that men frequently feel dimly, in the obscure depths of their personality, a truth which, because it has not yet risen to the surface of consciousness, is not for them clothed in the forms of the understanding, is unexpressed in words, and may even seem—for lack of successful verbalization—ineffable. In the end these ineffable insights, these formless divinations of truth, must be capable of receiving upon them the form and the stamp of rational statement and expression. They must be capable of rational defence. Otherwise they would not *be* truths.

These instinctive “feelings” which men have for the truth, perhaps because they are biologically much older and more experienced than are the categories of logic and science—which were acquired by the human race only yesterday—are sometimes wiser than the latter. This is especially the case in those matters which more deeply concern human life, questions of value, moral questions, the conduct of affairs. In matters of pure physical fact, in chemistry, biology, astronomy, we may well trust the scientist. Indeed we should be foolish to trust anyone else. But in matters of human values humanity at large has sound instincts. These instincts or feelings are likely to be vague, inarticulate, and cloudy. But it is better to be vaguely right than to be precisely wrong. And the wise man will give ear to the feelings of humanity and endeavour to discover *what* is the truth which, deeply hidden within them, gives them their vitality. Or at least he will take it as a danger-sign if his theories seriously violate them. This is what is sound in the old appeals to “the facts of the moral consciousness” which a former generation of philosophers were wont to make. They knew that if an ethical theory violates and outrages the moral intuitions of mankind, this is probably a sign that something is wrong. And in this they were wiser than those who, in the interests of the latest scientific fad or fashion, are ready to deride or ignore the deepest convictions of humanity.

We have now very briefly reviewed arguments on both sides of this

question. We are not yet in a position to reach any definite conclusions. But there are certain very modest and tentative results which seem to me to emerge from the discussion. And these may now be indicated.

Firstly, ethical absolutism will have to be rejected. The arguments of the ethical relativist do not conclusively demonstrate their favourite contention that there is no universal code of morals applicable to all human beings. But they do prove that morality is relative to human needs and has no meaning apart from human requirements. They prove that there can be no such thing as an absolute categorical imperative. All imperatives must be hypothetical. It is only *if* human beings have need of attaining certain ends that they "ought" to do so and so. Apart from the need of attaining ends the word "ought" has no meaning. It is, therefore, impossible any longer to conceive morality as a law of the whole universe in the same way as mathematical propositions or the laws of logic are laws of the universe. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that the moral law is, like the proposition  $2 + 2 = 4$ , valid on Mars or that it binds all rational beings everywhere. The beings on Mars, or even the future supermen of our earth, may have a morality quite different from ours, since they may have different natures and different needs. Our (human) morality is relative to our (human) nature.

Secondly, the position as regards ethical relativity is still unclear. We may accept from it the view that morality is relative to human nature in general. But its characteristic concept is that morality is relative to the special natures of different social groups, and that there is, consequently, no morality which is applicable to all human beings. This, in fact, is what is commonly understood by the term ethical relativity. Now none of the arguments adduced so far by the anti-relativist demonstrate conclusively that this is false. For what they all amount to is that conclusions can be drawn from the view of the ethical relativist which contradict our subjective moral feelings. It has not been shown that they contradict any empirically verifiable objective *facts*. And this is what would be necessary if we were to have a conclusive demonstration that ethical relativity is false. The feelings which relativism outrages *may* be mere subjective and irrational emotions which have no bearing upon any objective truth and no scientific or philosophical cogency. If therefore the anti-relativist proposes to urge belief in any kind of universal morality, he will have to find for it some more solid and definitely factual basis than is afforded by "moral feelings." This is a challenge which believers in a universal morality must certainly accept.

The most that can at present be urged in favour of the contentions of the anti-relativist is that it is unwise wholly to ignore and over-ride natural human feelings. "Feeling" is a slippery word, and is used to

cover many different things. Some "feelings" may be irrational. But others may not. What are vaguely called feelings may sometimes be instinctive and doubtless confused perceptions of truth. The radical empiricist is too apt to lump together such different experiences as anger and jealousy (which are genuine emotions) on the one hand, and men's vague intuitions of truth on the other; and to dismiss them both contemptuously as "mere emotions." The deep repugnance which moral minds feel to the conclusions of the ethical relativist may be based on a dim perception of genuine truth. That ethical relativity stands in flat contradiction to moral feeling ought to be taken at least as a danger signal.

## The Moral Concepts\*

THE THEORY of the emotional origin of moral judgments I am here advocating does not imply that such a judgment affirms the existence of a moral emotion in the mind of the person who utters it: he may do so without feeling any emotion at all. No doubt, to say that a certain act is good or bad may be the mere expression of an emotion felt with regard to it, just as to say that the sun is hot or the weather cold may be a mere expression of a sensation of heat or cold produced by the sun or the weather. But such judgments express subjective facts in terms which strictly speaking have a different meaning. To attribute a quality to something is not the same as to state the existence of a particular emotion or sensation in the mind that perceives it. This, however, does not imply that the term used to denote the quality may not have a subjective origin. I maintain, on the contrary, that the qualities assigned to the subjects of moral judgments really are generalizations derived from approval or disapproval felt with regard to certain modes of conduct, that they are tendencies to feel one or the other of these emotions interpreted as qualities, as dynamic tendencies, in the phenomena which gave rise to the emotion. A similar translation of emotional states into terms of qualities assigned to external phenomena is found in many other cases: something is "fearful" because people fear it, "admirable" because people admire it. When we call an act good or bad, we do not *state* the existence of any emotional tendencies, any more than, when we call a landscape beautiful, we state any characteristics of beauty: we refer the subject of the judgment to a class of phenomena which we are used to call good or bad. But we are used to call them so because they have evoked moral approval or disapproval in ourselves or in other persons from whom we have learned the use of those words.

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\* From *Ethical Relativity*, by Edward Westermarck, Chapter V, pp. 114-147. Humanities Press. Reprinted by permission.

Most people follow a very simple method in judging of an act. Particular modes of conduct have their traditional labels, many of which are learned with language itself; and the moral judgment commonly consists simply in labelling the act according to certain obvious characteristics which it presents in common with others belonging to the same group.<sup>1</sup> We hear that some one has appropriated another's property, this is theft, it is wrong; some one tells an untruth, this is lying, it is wrong; some one gives money to a needy person, this is charitable, it is good; and so forth. But when we examine the nature of these acts we find that they are apt to give rise to or, as we may also put it, to become the objects of, certain emotions, either of disapproval or approval, and it is the tendency to feel one or the other of these emotions that has led people to call them bad or good. Those who first established the use of these and all other moral concepts felt disapproval or approval and expressed in the concepts their tendency to feel such an emotion in the given circumstances. This is what may be called the intrinsic meaning of the terms. I do not say that those who use them are aware of this meaning. We are often unable to tell what is really implied in a concept that we predicate to a certain phenomenon. When any one is asked what he means by saying that something is or exists, or that something is the cause of something else, I suppose that everybody who is not a philosopher, and many a philosopher also, feels somewhat bewildered. As Mr. Bertrand Russell observes, "to say that a word has a meaning is not to say that those who use the word correctly have ever thought out what the meaning is: the use of the word comes first, and the meaning is to be distilled out of it by observation and analysis. . . . A word is used 'correctly' when the average hearer will be affected by it in the way intended."<sup>2</sup> When we want to find out the intrinsic meaning of a term we have to examine the circumstances in which it is used. And in analyzing the predicates of moral judgments, we are guided by the fact that if we ourselves emphatically and truly mean what we say when we pronounce such a judgment, we

<sup>1</sup> I have copied these two sentences from my *Moral Ideas* (i. 9). They show that I was fully aware of the fact, subsequently stated by Professor McDougall (*An Introduction to Social Psychology* (London, 1926), p. 185 sq.), that "the emotions on which a man's moral judgments are based may be not his own emotions at the time of passing judgment, and not even his own earlier emotions, but the emotions, especially that disinterested emotion we call moral indignation, of those who in bygone ages have played their parts in the shaping of the moral tradition." His reference to my theory of the emotional origin of moral judgments suggests that I had overlooked the distinction between what he calls "original moral judgment and imitative moral judgments." As regards the latter, he says, the intellectualist doctrine, according to which the act of classing precedes and determines the moral emotion, is true; while "as regards original moral judgments, Westermarck is in the right—they proceed directly from emotions."

<sup>2</sup> B. Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London, 1922), p. 197 sq. Cf. G. C. Field, *Moral Theory* (London, 1921), p. 5 sq.

recognize that we are apt, or at least think we are apt, to feel a moral emotion of either approval or disapproval with regard to that on which the judgment is pronounced.

Professor Sorley, who admits that "feeling and striving" are anterior to moral ideas and moral judgment, argues that once the transition to the moral judgment is made, "we are no longer concerned with subjective emotions but with the validity of the assertion that this or that is good. Morality begins with judgments about good and evil, right and wrong, and not simply with emotions—retributive, parental, sympathetic, or what not."<sup>3</sup> How this transition from emotions to moral judgments has taken place we are not told. In my opinion, as already said, the tendency to feel moral approval or disapproval was interpreted as a quality in the phenomenon that gave rise to it, and, for reasons stated before, the concept expressing this quality was supposed to give objective validity to the judgment in which it was the predicate. If it were based on an emotion it could not do so; hence the violent opposition to the theory of the emotional origin of moral judgments. But I feel tempted to quote Hobbes' sagacious remarks:—"In reasoning, a man must take heed of words; which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker; such as are the names of virtues, and vices; for one man calleth wisdome, what another calleth feare; and one cruelty, what another justice; one prodigality, what another magnanimity; and one gravity, what another stupidity, &c. And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination. No more can metaphors, and tropes of speech: but these are less dangerous, because they profess their inconstancy; which the other do not."<sup>4</sup>

In order to show that the concepts which are used as predicates in moral judgments are ultimately based upon emotions it is necessary to examine the relations between the concepts and the emotions. This is a task which has been much neglected by the moralists of the emotional school, although it is evidently a matter of paramount importance. I shall restrict my analysis to the principal terms used in English, all of which have equivalents in other European languages. To what extent they have equivalents in non-European tongues I do not take upon myself to decide. That all existing peoples, even the lowest, have moral emotions is as certain as that they have customs, and there can be no doubt that they give expression to those emotions in their speech. But it is another question how far their emotions have led to such generalizations as are implied in moral concepts. Many savages have terms more or

<sup>3</sup> W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God* (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 67, 69.

<sup>4</sup> T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, i. 4 (Oxford, 1881), p. 26.



less corresponding to our "good" and "bad," which, like our own terms, are used to express moral, as well as other, qualities.<sup>5</sup> It seems very probable that originally moral concepts were not clearly differentiated from other more comprehensive generalizations, and that they assumed a more definite shape only by slow degrees. At the same time we must not expect to find the beginning of this process reflected in the vocabularies of languages. There is every reason to believe that a savage distinguishes between the "badness" of a man and the "badness" of a piece of food, although he may have no clear idea of the distinction. Language is a rough generalizer: even more or less superficial resemblance between different phenomena often suffices to establish linguistic identity between them. Compare the rightness of a line with the rightness of conduct, the wrongness of an opinion with the wrongness of an act. And notice the different significations given to the verb "ought" in the following sentences:—"They ought to be in town by this time, as the train left Paris last night"; "If you wish to be healthy you ought to rise early"; "You ought always to tell the truth." But even the meaning of a term that is used in a moral sense may vary considerably. In this respect it resembles the meaning of other words, which, as Mr. Bertrand Russell puts it, "is an area, like a target: it may have a bull's eye, but the outlying parts of the target are still more or less within the meaning, in a gradually diminishing degree as we travel further from the bull's eye."<sup>6</sup>

In ethical treatises there are two moral concepts that compete with each other for supremacy: that of *ought* or *duty*, and that of *goodness*. According to Kant, in fact, all morality consists in the doing of duty for duty's sake, and what is good is what ought to be done. Several later writers have accepted the former of these propositions, but maintain that there are good actions which surpass acts of duty in value, though they fall outside the moral field because they are done for an end that is good and not for the sake of their intrinsic rightness. Professor de Burgh, for instance, who admits that acts done from spontaneous affection may be of higher value than acts of duty for duty's sake, argues that "it is paradoxical to confuse the two types of action and valuation by merging them, under the common rubric 'moral', into one."<sup>7</sup> I think that to most people who are not swayed by the Kantian terminology it would rather seem para-

<sup>5</sup> See *Moral Ideas*, i. 131 sq.; and W. Planert, "Le développement des idées morales examiné au point de vue linguistique," in *Le Monde orientale*, xviii. (Uppsala, 1925), p. 124 sqq.

<sup>6</sup> Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 197 sq.

<sup>7</sup> W. G. de Burgh, "On Right and Good: the Problem of Objective Right," in *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, v. (London, 1930), pp. 432, 254. Similar views have been expressed by H. Münsterberg (*Der Ursprung der Sittlichkeit* [Freiburg, i. B., 1889], p. 98 sqq.) and N. H. Bang (*Begrebet Moral* [Köbenhavn, 1897], pp. 145, 190).

doxical to deny the epithet "moral" to the conduct of a man who from pity relieves a sufferer or a mother who sacrifices health and pleasure for her child, on the ground that they act thus from love without thought of moral obligation. Other writers reserve the field of morality for duty alone because they look upon social regulation as the origin of all morality. Bain says that "positive good deeds and self-sacrifice are the preserving salt of human life; but they transcend the region of morality proper, and occupy a sphere of their own."<sup>8</sup> Durkheim argues that it would be "contraire à toute méthode" to include under the same heading acts which are obligatory and acts which are objects of admiration, and at the same time exempt from all regulation; "si donc, pour rester fidèle à l'usage, on réserve aux premiers la qualification de moraux, on ne saurait la donner également aux seconds."<sup>9</sup> But does not ordinary usage sanction goodness as a moral quality as well as rightness or conformity to the rule of duty, and what would the history of ethics be if all theories of goodness were excluded from it?

At the same time it seems to me obvious that the idea of duty, being derived from custom, is prior to that of moral goodness. To say, as Green does, that the idea of an absolute and a common good "must have been at work in the minds of men before they could be capable of recognizing any kind of action as one that *ought* to be done,"<sup>10</sup> is a philosophical construction for which there is not a whit of evidence. Professor Moore even asserts that our "duty" can only be defined "as that action, which will cause more good to exist in the Universe than any possible alternative";<sup>11</sup> but then he is guilty of a confusion between the concept of duty and what he thinks that people ought to do. And when he further maintains that, as we can never be sure that any action will produce the greatest value possible, "we never have any reason to suppose that an action is our duty,"<sup>12</sup> and that if a man has adopted a given course of conduct after taking all possible care to assure himself that it is the best, and it, owing to some subsequent event, which he could not possibly have foreseen, turns out not to be the best, his action was wrong<sup>13</sup>—I think the aberrations of speculative ethics from the ordinary use of terms may be said to have reached their pitch; these statements make one think of the sin of unbelief attributed to the poor pagans who could never have heard of the Gospel. That any one

<sup>8</sup> A. Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (London, 1880), p. 292.

<sup>9</sup> E. Durkheim, *De la division du travail social* (Paris, 1893), p. 30. A similar view is taken by Professor R. Lagerborg ("La nature de la morale," in *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, xi. (Paris, 1903), p. 466).

<sup>10</sup> T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford, 1899), p. 239 sq.

<sup>11</sup> G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 148.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> G. E. Moore, *Ethics* (London, s.d.), p. 191 sqq.

ought to do the best he is able to do, is a proposition often heard;<sup>14</sup> but even if it were self-evident, as Professor Laird believes,<sup>15</sup> it could not affect the concept of ought, because it would only tell us what we ought to do, not what it means that we ought to do it. I venture, however, to think that those who state or accept this proposition themselves have actually two standards of duty, one by which they measure man and his doings in the abstract, with reference to an ideal which they identify with duty, and another by which they are guided in their practical moral judgments upon their neighbours' conduct. It seems to me that Professor Laird himself makes an admission in this direction when he writes:—"We are reluctant to admit that *anyone* should be sacrificed deliberately in order that others may gain, and when we are compelled to act in this fashion we do not care to think of it. On the other hand we praise, with very occasional reserve, anyone who sacrifices himself for such an end."<sup>16</sup> The conscientious man is apt to judge himself more severely than he judges others, and may be unwilling to admit that he ever can do more than his duty, seeing how difficult it is even to do all that he ought to do, and impressed, as he would be, with the feeling of his own shortcomings; yet I do not see how he could conscientiously deny that he has omitted to do many praiseworthy or heroic deeds without holding himself blamable for such omissions. My general conclusion, then, is that the concept of duty can no more be derived from that of goodness than the concept of goodness from that of duty. And the reason for their fundamental difference is that the concept of duty springs from the emotion of moral disapproval and that of goodness from the emotion of moral approval. Considering that disapproval has in all ages played a far more important part in the moral consciousness of mankind than approval, I am unable to subscribe to the opinion that "the conception of the Good is the central point of ethics."<sup>17</sup>

The notion embodied in "ought" is frequently looked upon as ultimate and unanalyzable. If this were the case we might, in our study of the moral consciousness, be able to draw up lists of duties, but we should be unable to understand or explain a single one of them, nay, the fact that there is a moral law at all would be a sheer mystery. Fortunately, however, we are not reduced to such incompetence. Far from being a simple notion, "ought" is clearly decomposable, even though it have a flavour of its own which is easier to feel than to describe. First of all, it

<sup>14</sup> H. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (London, 1913), p. 219. F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (Oxford, 1927), p. 157 n. 1. O. Stapledon, "The Bearing of Ethics on Psychology," in *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, ii. (London, 1927), p. 366. J. S. Mackenzie, *A Manual of Ethics* (London, 1929), pp. 321, 404.

<sup>15</sup> J. Laird, *A Study in Moral Theory* (London, 1926), p. 200.

<sup>16</sup> Laird, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>17</sup> L. T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution* (London, 1915), p. 19.

expresses a conation. When I feel that I ought to do a thing, I experience an impulse to do it, though some opposite impulse may finally determine my action; and when I say to another man, "You ought to do this or that," there is certainly implied a professed wish to influence his action in a given direction. In the notion of "duty," the ethical import of which is identical with that of "ought," the conative element is not so obvious. Closely connected with the conative nature of "ought" is the imperative character it is apt to assume; and both its conativeness and its imperativeness are determined by the cognition that the mode of conduct which ought to be performed or refrained from is not, or will possibly not be, performed or refrained from. It is also this notion of its not being so that determines the emotion which gives to "ought" the quality of a moral predicate. The doing of what ought not to be done, or the refraining from what ought not to be refrained from, is apt to call forth moral disapproval; this is the most essential fact involved in the notion of "ought."

Every "ought"-judgment contains implicitly a prohibition of that which ought *not* to be done. Nobody would ever have dreamt of laying down a moral rule if the idea of its transgression had not presented itself to his mind. We may reverse the words of the Apostle<sup>18</sup> and say that where no transgression is, there is no law; the lawbreaker is, in a way, the law-maker.<sup>19</sup> When Solon was asked why he had specified no punishment for one who had murdered a father, he replied that he supposed it could not occur to any man to commit such a crime.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the modern Shintoist concludes that the primæval Japanese were pure and holy from the fact that they are represented as a people who had no moral commandments.<sup>21</sup> It is this prohibitive character of "ought" that has imparted to duty that idea of antagonism to inclination which has found its most famous expression in the Kantian ethics, and which made Bentham look upon the word itself as having in it "something disagreeable and repulsive."<sup>22</sup> It is this intrinsic connection between "ought" and "wrong" that has given to duty the most prominent place in ethical speculation when moral pessimism has been predominant. While the ancient Greeks, with whom happiness was the state of nature, hardly spoke of duty,<sup>23</sup> but held virtue to be the supreme good, Christianity, on

<sup>18</sup> *Romans*, iv. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. F. Thilly, *Introduction to Ethics* (New York, 1905), p. 280.

<sup>20</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Solon*, 10. Cicero, *Pro S. Roscio Amerino*, 25.

<sup>21</sup> W. E. Griffis, *The Religions of Japan* (London, 1895), p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> J. Bentham, *Deontology*, i. (London & Edinburgh, 1834), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Professor C. C. J. Webb ("Obligation, Autonomy, and the Common Good," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, N. S. xx. [London, 1920], p. 120 *sq.*) observes that Aristotle does not altogether ignore the obligatory character of morality, as appears from his frequent use of the word *δεῖ*, but that he did not look upon it as the distinctive feature of moral experience.

the other hand, which looked upon man as a being born and bred in sin, regarded morals pre-eminently as a matter of duty. Then, again, in modern times, Kant's categorical imperative came as a reaction against that moral optimism which once more had given the preference to virtue, considering everything in the world or in humanity as beautiful and good from the very beginning.<sup>24</sup>

It is not, then, in the emotion of approval that we must seek for the origin of the concepts of "ought" and "duty." At the same time we often applaud him who is faithful to his duty in circumstances where the average man would have felt a strong temptation to yield to a contrary impulse. It is to such cases that we trace that adoration of duty, or rather of its fulfilment, which has been so common among moralists since the days of Kant, who attributed moral worth only to dutiful acts that result from a successful struggle against opposite inclinations.<sup>25</sup> They have a tendency to confine the words "ought" and "duty" to cases where there is generally a strong desire to do what ought not to be done.<sup>26</sup> Now there is no contradiction in the omission of an act being disapproved of and the performance of it being praised; and when the word "duty" is used in a derivative sense as a concrete rule of duty, it may even refer to a course of conduct the omission of which is in ordinary circumstances, but not necessarily in every instance, disapproved of.<sup>27</sup> Strictly speaking, however, "ought" and "duty" only express the tendency of an act's omission to call forth moral disapproval and say nothing about the consequences of its performance. "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."<sup>28</sup> Duty is a stern lawgiver who threatens with punishment but promises no reward.

The tendency in a phenomenon to arouse moral disapproval is directly

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Th. Ziegler, *Social Ethics* (London, 1892), pp. 22, 75 sq.

<sup>25</sup> See *infra* [not included in this selection].

<sup>26</sup> Cf. F. Staudinger, *Das Sittengesetz* (Berlin, 1897), p. 317; C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London, 1930), p. 164.

<sup>27</sup> This use of the word "duty" has made it possible to speak of "conflicting duties." Such an expression can only mean that rules of conduct which generally ought to be followed may in exceptional cases come into conflict with each other. This does not justify Bradley's phrase, "I neglect duty because of duty" (*Ethical Studies* [Oxford, 1927], p. 222); for it can never be my duty at the same time to do a thing and not to do it (Cf. Kant, *Einleitung in die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 4 [*Gesammelte Schriften*, vi. [Berlin, 1914], p. 224; T. K. Abbott's translation in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and other Works on the Theory of Ethics* [London, 1898], p. 280]). The "conflict of duties" is particularly felt by a person who in a given moment hesitates whether he ought to follow the one or the other of two conflicting general rules of duty (Cf. H. Y. Groenewegen, "Pflicht und Gewissen in der Ethik," in *Studier tillägnade Efraim Liljeqvist*, i. [Lund, 1930], p. 246). The subject has been discussed at considerable length by E. Laas (*Idealismus und Positivismus*, ii. [Berlin, 1882], p. 261 sqq.) and F. Staudinger (*op. cit.*, p. 324 sqq.).

<sup>28</sup> *St. Luke*, xvii. 10.

expressed by the term *bad*, and closely allied to it is the term *wrong*. But there is some difference in the use of these words. While "bad" may be applied both to a person's character and to his conduct, only his conduct may be said to be wrong. The reason for this is that the concept of moral wrongness is modelled on the notion of a moral law, the breach of which is regarded as "wrong"; and by laying down a moral law we only enjoin a certain course of conduct, we do not command a person to have a certain character. To say that an act or forbearance is a duty is thus, so far as its morality is concerned, exactly the same thing as to say that the opposite mode of conduct is wrong.

"Wrong" is popularly regarded as the opposite of *right*, and they really are contradictories, but only within the sphere of positive moral valuation. We do not call the actions of irresponsible beings, like animals and infants, "right," although they are not wrong. Nor do we pronounce morally indifferent actions of responsible beings "right," unless we wish thereby especially to point out that they are not wrong; but it would be more strictly accurate to say that people have "*a right*" to do them. A right action, in the strict sense of the word, is on a given occasion *the* right action, unless a choice of alternatives is permitted by the rule of duty; right is what is in conformity to duty. Those who recognize the existence of something super-obligatory would not say that it is not right; they would say that it is more than right, but not that it is more right. "Right" has no comparative; a certain mode of conduct is either in conformity to the rule of duty or not. There are degrees of badness and of goodness, as the moral disapproval and the moral approval may be stronger or weaker, but there are no degrees of rightness.

The fact that the right mode of conduct is that which is in conformity to duty and not infrequently requires self-restraint, accounts for the erroneous opinion held by many ethical writers that "right" is intrinsically connected with moral approval. The choice of the right alternative, as I said in connection with the concept of duty, may give us satisfaction and call forth in us an emotion of approval, and the judgment in which we point out the rightness of the act may actually contain applause. The manner in which the judgment, "That is right," is pronounced often shows that it is meant to be an expression of praise. But this does not imply that the concept "right" by itself has reference to moral approval and involves praise. It only means that in one word is expressed a certain concept—that of conformity to duty—*plus* an emotion of approval. That "right" *per se* involves no praise is obvious from the fact that we regard it as perfectly right to pay a debt and to keep a promise, or to refrain from killing, robbing, or lying, though these acts or forbearances have no tendency whatever to evoke in us an emotion of moral approval.

The concept of "right," then, as implying that the opposite mode of conduct would have been wrong, ultimately derives its moral significance from moral disapproval. This may seem strange considering that "right" is commonly looked upon as positive and "wrong" as its negation. But we must remember that language and popular conceptions in these matters start from the notion of a moral rule or command. It is held to be of paramount importance that such modes of conduct as are apt to arouse general moral disapproval should be avoided. People try to prevent them by prohibitions and injunctions, often emphasized by threats of penalties for the transgressors. The whole moral and social discipline is based upon commands; customs are rules of conduct, and so are laws. It is nature, then, that the notion of a command should figure uppermost in popular conceptions of morality. Obedience to the command is right, the breach of it is wrong. But the fact that gave birth to the command itself was the disapproval called forth by the act which the command forbids or by the omission of that which it enjoins.

I have now spoken of "right" as an adjective. Used as a substantive, to denote *a right*, it also, in whatever sense it be applied, expresses a concept that is rooted in the emotion of moral disapproval. To have a right to do a thing is to be allowed to do it, either by positive law, in the case of a legal right, or by the moral law, in the case of a moral right; in other words, to have a moral right to do a thing implies that it is not wrong to do it. But generally the concept of "a right" means something more than this. From the fact that an act is allowable, that it is not wrong, it follows, as a rule, that it ought not to be prevented; and this character of inviolability is largely included in the very concepts of rights. That a man has a right to live does not merely mean that he commits no wrong by supporting his life, but it chiefly means that it would be wrong of other people to prevent him from living, that it is their duty to refrain from killing him, or even, as the case may be, that it is their duty to help him to live. And in order to constitute a right in him, the duty in question must be a duty *to him*, that is, a duty to be performed for his own sake. To kill another person's slave may be condemned as an injury done to the slave himself, in which case it is a duty to the slave not to kill him; but it may also be condemned on account of the loss it inflicts upon the master, and in this case it is deemed a duty to the master not to kill his slave. In the latter case we can hardly say that the duty of refraining from killing the slave constitutes a right to life in the slave: it only constitutes a right in the master to retain his slave alive and not to be deprived of him by an act causing his death.

So commonly does the conception of a right belonging to a person contain the idea of a duty which other persons owe him, that it seems

necessary to point out the existence of rights in which no such idea is involved. A man's right to defend his country, for instance, does not intrinsically imply that it is wrong of the enemy to disable him from doing so. But on the other hand there are rights which are nothing else than duties towards those who have the rights. A right is not always a person's right to do, or to refrain from doing, something; it may have exclusive reference to other people's conduct. That a father has a right to be obeyed by his children only means that it is a duty incumbent on them to obey him. That a person has the right to bodily integrity only means that it is wrong to inflict on him a bodily injury. These rights may, no doubt, if violated, give rise to certain rights of activity: the father may have a right to exact from his children the obedience they owe him, the person who is attacked may have a right to defend himself. But in such cases the right of exacting obedience or of resisting wrong is certainly not identical with the right of being obeyed or of not being wronged.

It is commonly said that rights have their corresponding duties. But if this expression is to be used, it must be remembered that the duty which "corresponds" to a right is, as a matter of fact, either included in that right or simply identical with it. The identity between the right and the duty, then, consists in this, that the notion of a right belonging to a person is identical with the notion of a duty towards him. Rights and duties are not identical in the sense that it is always a duty to insist on a right, though this has been urged. If anybody prevents me from making use of my right, it may no doubt be deemed a duty on my part not to tolerate the wrong committed against me, but nothing of the kind is involved in the concept of a right. And the same may be said with reference to the assertion that a right to do a thing is always, at the same time, a duty to do it—an assertion which is a consequence of the doctrine that there is nothing morally indifferent and nothing that goes beyond duty; in other words, that all conduct of responsible beings is either wrong or obligatory. Even if this doctrine were accepted by our common moral experience—which it certainly is not—even if there were a constant coincidence between the acts which a person has a right to perform and such as it is his duty to perform, that would not constitute identity between the concepts of "right" and "duty." According to the meaning of a right, A's right may be B's duty towards A; but A's right cannot mean A's duty towards B or anybody else.

Closely connected with the notion of wrongness and rightness are the notions of *injustice* and *justice*. Injustice is a kind of wrongness. To be unjust is always to be unjust to somebody, a violation of some one's right. Justice is a kind of rightness. It involves the notion that a duty to some-



body, a duty corresponding to a right in him, is fulfilled;<sup>29</sup> we may say that justice "demands" that it should be fulfilled. As an act is "right" if its omission is wrong, so an act is "just" in the strict sense of the word, if its omission is unjust. But like the adjective "right," the adjective "just" is also sometimes used in a wider sense, to denote that something is "not unjust." As non-obligatory acts that are not wrong can hardly be denied to be right, so non-obligatory acts that are not unjust can hardly be denied to be just, although they are not demanded by justice.

At the same time "injustice" and "justice" are not simply other names for violating or respecting rights. Whenever we style an act unjust, we emphasize that it involves partiality. We do not generally call murder and robbery unjust but wrong or criminal, because the partiality involved in their commission is quite obscured by their glaring wrongness or criminality; but we at once admit their gross injustice when we consider that the murderer and robber indulged their own inclinations with utter disregard of their neighbours' rights. On the other hand, we look upon "unjust" as an exceedingly appropriate term for a judge who condemns an innocent man with the intention to save the culprit; and we say it is just or, more emphatically, that justice demands that the innocent should not suffer in the place of the guilty. When we style an act "just," in the strict sense of the term, we point out that an undue preference would have been shown some one by its omission. It is true, as Adam Smith observes, that "we may often fulfil all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing,"<sup>30</sup> and that the man who barely refrains from violating the person or estate or reputation of his neighbours so far does justice to them; but in such cases we hardly apply the epithet "just," simply because there is no reason to emphasize the partiality of those who act in the contrary manner.

It is the emphasis laid on the duty of impartiality that gives justice a special prominence in connection with punishments and rewards. A man's rights depend to a great extent upon his actions. Other things being equal, the criminal has not the same rights to inviolability as regards reputation, freedom, property, or life as the innocent man; the miser and egoist have not the same rights as the benefactor and the philanthropist. On these differences in rights due to differences in conduct the terms "just" and "unjust" lay stress; for in such cases an injustice would have been committed if the rights had been equal. When we say of a criminal that he has been "justly" imprisoned, we point out that he was no victim to undue partiality, as he had forfeited the general right to freedom on account

<sup>29</sup> According to the *Institutiones* of Justinian (i. 1. 1), "justice is the constant and perpetual will to render to each one his right."

<sup>30</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1887), p. 117.

of his crime. When we say of a benefactor that he has been "justly" rewarded, we point out that no favour was partially bestowed upon him in preference to others, as he had acquired the special right of being rewarded. But the "justice" of a punishment or a reward, strictly speaking, involves something more than this; as we have seen, what is strictly just is always the discharge of a duty corresponding to a right that would have been in a partial manner disregarded by a transgression of the duty. If it is just that a person should be rewarded he ought to be rewarded, and to fulfil this duty is to do him justice. Again, if it is just that a person should be punished he ought to be punished, and his not being punished is an injustice to other persons. It is an injustice towards all those whose condemnation of the wrong act finds its recognized expression in the punishment, inasmuch as their rightful claim that the criminal should be punished, their right of resisting wrong, is thereby violated in favour of the wrong-doer. Moreover, his not being punished is an injustice towards other criminals, who have been, or who will be, punished for similar acts, in so far as they have a right to demand that no undue preference should be shown to anybody whose guilt is equal to theirs. Retributive punishment may admit of a certain latitude as to the retribution. It may be a matter of small concern from the community's point of view whether men are fined or imprisoned for the commission of a certain crime. But justice demands that in equal circumstances all of them should be punished with the same severity, since the crime has equally affected their rights.

The emphasis which "injustice" lays on the partiality of a certain mode of conduct always involves a condemnation of that partiality. Like every other kind of wrongness, "injustice" is thus a concept that is obviously based on the emotion of moral disapproval. And so is the concept of "justice," whether it involves the notion that an injustice would be committed if a certain duty is not fulfilled, or is simply used to denote that a certain course of conduct is "not unjust." But there is yet another sense in which the word "just" is applied. It may emphasize the impartiality of an act in a tone of praise. Considering how difficult it may be to be perfectly impartial and give every man his due, especially when one's own interests are concerned, it is only natural that men may be applauded for being just, and, consequently, that to call a person "just" may be to praise him. So, also, "justice" is used as the name for a virtue, "the mistress and queen of all virtues."<sup>31</sup> But all this does not imply that an emotion of moral approval enters into the *concept* of "justice." It only means that one word is used to express a certain concept—a concept which, as we have seen, ultimately derives its import from moral disapproval—and in addition an

<sup>31</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, iii. 6.

emotion of approval. That the concept of "justice" by itself has no reference to the emotion of approval appears from the fact that it is no praise to say of an act that it is "only just."

From the concepts springing from moral disapproval we shall pass to those springing from moral approval. Foremost among these ranks the concept *good*.

The word "good" is applied to a great variety of objects.<sup>32</sup> The use made of it is in fact so extensive that it has been supposed to be essentially a collection of homonyms, such that the set of things to which it is applied—roughly, those in connection with which we heard it pronounced in early years, like a good bed, a good kick, a good baby, a good God—have no common characteristic at all.<sup>33</sup> Most frequently the concept of goodness has been considered closely related to desire, pleasure, or satisfaction. According to Hobbes, a man calls "good" whatever is the object of his appetite or desire, and "evil" the object of his hate or aversion.<sup>34</sup> Spinoza said that "we deem a thing to be good because we strive for it, wish for it, long for it, or desire it";<sup>35</sup> but also, that we call a thing "good" or "evil" in so far as we perceive that it affects us with pleasure or pain.<sup>36</sup> Locke<sup>37</sup> and Hume<sup>38</sup> looked upon aptness to produce pleasure as the criterion of goodness. According to Bradley, "we may speak of the good, generally, as that which satisfies desire. It is that which we approve of, and in which we can rest with a feeling of contentment. Or we may describe it again, if we please, as being the same as worth."<sup>39</sup> But whatever all other good things may have in common, "goodness," in the emphatically moral sense of the word—and with this alone I am here concerned—has a characteristic of its own, which makes it widely different from any other "good":<sup>40</sup> it is a concept rooted in the tendency to feel the emotion of moral approval, which implies a kindly feeling towards another individual

<sup>32</sup> Cf. W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford, 1930), p. 65 *sqq.*

<sup>33</sup> C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (London, 1927), p. 124 *sq.*

<sup>34</sup> Hobbes, *op. cit.*, i. 6, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> B. de Spinoza, *Ethica*, iii. prop. 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. prop. 8.

<sup>37</sup> J. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ii. 21. 43, vol. i. (Oxford, 1894), p. 340 *sq.*

<sup>38</sup> D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, iii. 1. 2 (Oxford, 1896), p. 472.

<sup>39</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (London, 1915), p. 402.

<sup>40</sup> Professor Sorley (*op. cit.*, p. 120 *sq.*) maintains that "the widespread and unreflective application of moral predicates—of 'good' and 'bad'—to the operations of mere things . . . is really a survival of the primitive animism which attributed to material things a life and mind similar to those of man." But animism, as we know it, certainly does not attribute everything which we would call "good" or "bad" to the activity of volitional or supposed volitional beings, and, generally speaking, I can see no reason whatever for believing that the terms which are used both in a moral and in a non-moral sense were originally expressions for moral qualities only. Language, as already said, is a rough generalizer.

as a cause of pleasure. This was clearly perceived by Hutcheson when he wrote that moral goodness "denotes our idea of some quality apprehended in actions, which procures approbation, attended with desire of the agent's happiness."<sup>41</sup> It is a serious defect of modern theories of value that they so frequently fail to distinguish properly between moral and other values.

"Good" conduct has often been identified with "right" conduct, but this identification is not borne out by the actual use of these terms, which should be our only criterion in fixing their meaning.<sup>42</sup> A father does right in supporting his children, inasmuch as he, by doing so, discharges a duty incumbent on him, but we do not say that he does a good deed by supporting them, or that it is good of him to do so. Nor do we call it good of a man to refrain from killing or robbing his neighbour, although his conduct is so far right. In these cases "good" has an emphatically moral meaning. If the question were put whether it is not always good that a person does his duty, nobody would of course deny that it is good. But then this predicate is used in a wider sense, not as a term of praise derived from the emotion of moral approval: we do not express any tendency to experience a kindly feeling towards a man because he refrains from killing another. The antithesis between "right" and "wrong" is, in a certain sense at least, contradictory, the antithesis between "good" and "bad" is only contrary. Every act—provided that it falls within the sphere of positive moral valuation—that is not wrong is right, but every act that is not bad is not necessarily good. Just as we may say of a thing that it is "not bad" and yet refuse to call it "good," so we may object to praising the discharge of a duty as "good," although the opposite course of conduct would be bad. But at the same time we *may* also very well praise a man for an act the omission of which would have incurred blame. To say of one and the same act that it is "right" and that it is "good," in the strict moral sense, really means that we judge of it from different points of view. Since moral praise expresses a kindly attitude of mind, it is commendable for a man not to be too niggard in his acknowledgment of other people's right conduct; whereas, self-praise being objectionable, only the other point of view is deemed proper when he passes a judgment on himself. He may say, without incurring censure, "I have done my duty, I have done what is right," but it would sound too self-complacent to say, "I have done a good deed," and be actually obnoxious to say, "I am a good man." The best

<sup>41</sup> F. Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London, 1753), p. 105.

<sup>42</sup> That "good" conduct and "right" conduct do not mean the same thing, which I pointed out in my *Moral Ideas*, has been recently emphasized by Dr. Ross (*op. cit.*, *passim*), although he could not of course, from his objectivistic point of view, accept my subjectivistic interpretation of this difference.

man even refuses to be called good by others:—"Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."<sup>43</sup>

While "goodness" is the general expression for moral praise, the word *virtue* is generally used to denote a disposition of mind that is characterized by some special kind of goodness. He who is habitually temperate possesses the virtue of temperance, he who is habitually brave the virtue of courage, he who is habitually generous the virtue of generosity. Even when a man is simply said to be "virtuous," this epithet is given him, more or less distinctly, with reference to some kind or kinds of goodness attributed to him: it may mean that he has many virtues, or that he has much of one. A Supreme Being who is regarded as all-good is not called virtuous.

Virtue has been said essentially to express effort, resistance, and conquest. According to Kant it is "the moral disposition in struggle";<sup>44</sup> according to others it is the harmony won, while merit is the winning of it.<sup>45</sup> But I do not see that the general concept of virtue presupposes struggle. A virtue, consisting in the disposition to will or not to will a certain kind of conduct, is not even reduced by the fact that no rival impulses make themselves felt. It is true that by struggle and conquest a man may display more virtue, namely, the virtue of self-restraint in addition to the virtue gained by it. The vigorous and successful contest against temptation constitutes a virtue by itself. For instance, the quality of mind that is exhibited in a habitual and victorious effort to subdue strong sexual passions is a virtue distinguishable from that of chastity, and the latter is not made greater thereby; he who exercises more self-restraint in resisting seductive impulses may have more merit, but merit is not necessarily proportionate to virtue. The virtues are broad generalizations of mental dispositions that on the whole are regarded as laudable. Owing to their stereotyped character it easily happens in individual cases that the possession of a virtue confers no merit upon the possessor. A man's virtues are no exact gauge of his general moral worth. In order to form a just opinion of the value of a person's character we must take into account the strength of his instinctive desires and the motives of his conduct; and there are virtues that pay no regard to either. A sober man who has no taste for intoxicants possesses the virtue of sobriety in no less degree than a man whose sobriety is the result of overcoming a strong desire. He who is brave with a view to being applauded is not inferior in courage to him who faces danger merely from a feeling of duty. The only thing that the posses-

<sup>43</sup> *St. Matthew*, xix. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, i. 1. 3 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, v. [Berlin, 1913], p. 84; Abbott's translation, p. 178).

<sup>45</sup> J. Dewey, *The Study of Ethics* (Ann Arbor, 1897), p. 133 sq. G. Simmel, *Einleitung in die Morawissenschaft*, i. (Berlin, 1892), p. 228. Cf. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, ii. (London, 1733), p. 36 sqq.

sion of a virtue presupposes is that it should have been tried and tested. We cannot say that people unacquainted with intoxicants have the virtue of sobriety, and that a man who never had anything to spend distinguishes himself for frugality. To attribute a virtue to somebody is always to bestow upon him some degree of praise, and it is not praise, only irony, to say of a man that he "makes a virtue of necessity."

There has been much discussion about the relation between virtue and duty, and it has been regarded as very complicated. We do not call it a virtue if a man habitually refrains from killing or robbing, or pays his debts, or performs a great number of other duties. We do call temperance and justice virtues, although we regard it as obligatory on a man to be temperate and just. We also call hospitality and charity virtues in cases where their exercise goes beyond the strict limits of duty. It is no wonder that those who consider the notion of duty incapable of being analyzed, or who fail to recognize its true import, are embarrassed by facts like these. But if my analysis of duty and virtue is correct, the relation between them is simple enough. That something is a duty implies that the opposite mode of conduct tends to evoke moral disapproval, that it is a virtue implies that the disposition to practise it tends to evoke moral approval. If the virtues actually cover a comparatively large field of the province of duty, that is due to their being dispositions of mind. We may praise the habits of justice and gratitude, even though we find nothing praiseworthy in an isolated just or grateful act.

There has been no less confusion with regard to the relation between duty and *merit*. Like the notions of goodness and virtue, the "meritorious" derives its origin from the emotion of moral approval; but while the former merely express a tendency to give rise to such an emotion, the "meritorious" implies that the object to which it refers merits praise, that it has a just claim to praise, in other words, that it ought to be recognized as good. This makes the term "meritorious" more emphatic than the term "good," but at the same time it narrows its province in a peculiar way. Just as the expression that something ought to be done implies the idea that it possibly may not be done, so the statement that something is meritorious, in pointing out its goodness, implies the idea that this goodness may fail to receive due recognition. It would be blasphemous to call the acts of a God who is conceived to be infinitely good "meritorious," since it would suggest a thinkable limitation of his goodness.

The emphatic claim to praiseworthiness made by the "meritorious" has led to its identification with the *superobligatory*. But from what has been said above it is manifest that they are not identical. As the discharge of a duty may be praised as a good deed, so it may also be regarded as an act that ought to be recognized as good. Practically, no doubt, there is a

certain antagonism between duty and merit. We praise, and especially we regard as deserving praise, only what is above the average,<sup>46</sup> and we censure what is below it. But although thus most acts that are deemed meritorious fall outside the ordinary limits of duty as roughly drawn by the popular mind, we are on the other hand often disposed to attribute merit to a man on account of an act which from a strict point of view is his duty, but a duty that most people in the same circumstances would have left undischarged. This shows that the antagonism between duty and merit is not absolute. And in the concept of merit *per se* no such antagonism is involved.

But while "meritorious" is not identical with "superobligatory," it is obvious that if a course of conduct which is not regarded as a duty is held to be meritorious, it is *eo ipso* admitted that a man can do more than his duty. This is denied both by those who derive goodness from duty and consider that what is good is what ought to be done, and by those who derive duty from goodness and consider that everybody ought to do the best he is able to do. Duty, which is the minimum of morality in so far as it implies that the opposite mode of conduct is wrong, is identified with the supreme moral ideal, which requires the best possible conduct for its realization. As I have said above, this rigorism is not supported by our practical moral judgments. It is a mere theory, which may be traced either to the direct or indirect influence of Protestant theology with its denial of all works of supererogation, or to the endeavours of normative moralists to preach the most elevated kind of morality they can conceive. For my own part I do not see how such a doctrine could serve any useful purpose at all. The recognition of a "superobligatory" does not lower the moral ideal, on the contrary it tends to raise it; and at the same time it makes it more possible to vindicate the moral law and administer it more strictly. It is nowadays a recognized principle in legislation that a law loses much of its weight if it cannot be enforced. If the realization of the highest moral ideal is commanded by a moral law, such a law will always remain a dead letter, and morality will gain nothing. It seems to me that far above the anxious effort to fulfil the commandments of duty stands the free and lofty aspiration to live up to an ideal, which, unattainable as it may be, threatens neither with blame nor remorse him who fails to reach its summits. Does not experience show that those whose minds are constantly prepossessed with thoughts of duty are apt to become inhuman, intolerant, indeed intolerable?

In the earlier part of the book I have tried to show that there are no

<sup>46</sup> Merit, as Professor S. Alexander (*Moral Order and Progress* [London, 1896], p. 196) says, "expresses the interval which separates the meritorious from the average."

moral truths in the ordinary sense of the word, which attributes objective validity to moral judgments. But if I am right in my assertion that the moral concepts intrinsically express a tendency to feel a moral emotion of either approval or disapproval, it is obvious that a judgment which contains such a concept may be said to be true if the person who pronounces it actually has a tendency to feel the emotion in question with reference to the subject of the judgment. Professor Sorley argues against me that if a value-judgment lacked that validity it assumes, the proposition "this is good" could never be either true or false; "it would only express some peculiar state of mind of the person making the assertion and would have no possible validity in itself—would be, indeed, simply an emotion put by mistake into the form of a proposition."<sup>47</sup> I thought it was generally recognized that every proposition is either true or false, and that this must consequently be the case also with the proposition "this is good," whatever be the meaning of its predicate. But whether it is true *or* false just depends on the meaning given to it. If, as I maintain, the objective validity of all moral valuation is an illusion, and the proposition "this is good" is meant to imply such validity, it must always be false. On the other hand, if "good" expresses a tendency to feel moral approval, the proposition in question is, as already said, true if there really is such a tendency with regard to that of which goodness is predicated, and false if there is no such tendency—people are often hypocrites in their moral judgments. The same predicate is thus used in a sense that makes the proposition always false, and in another sense that makes it either true or false—just as the proposition "the sun sets" was always false in those days when everybody believed that it was the sun and not the earth that moved, but may be either true or false when its predicate is used in the present sense of the word. As to the alleged mistake of putting an emotion into the form of a proposition, it should be noticed that all of us, even normative moralists, are guilty of similar "mistakes" when we say that something is fearful, wonderful, hateful, admirable, lovable, or what not.

Professor Moore has raised other objections to my theory of the emotional origin of the moral concepts. He argues that if one person says "this action is wrong," and another says of the very same action that it is not wrong, and each of them merely makes a judgment about his own feelings towards it, they are not differing in opinion about it at all, and, generally speaking, there is absolutely no such thing as a difference of opinion upon moral questions. "If two persons think they differ in opinion on a moral question (and it certainly seems as if they sometimes *think* so),

<sup>47</sup> Sorley, *op. cit.*, p. 68.



they are always, on this view, making a mistake, and a mistake so gross that it seems hardly possible that they should make it: a mistake as gross as that which would be involved in thinking that when you say, 'I did not come from Cambridge to-day' you are denying what I say when I say 'I did.' " This seems to Professor Moore to be a very serious objection to my view.<sup>48</sup> But let me choose another, analogous case, to illustrate the nature of his argument. One person says, "This food is disagreeable," and another says of the very same food that it is not disagreeable. We should undoubtedly assert that they have different opinions about it. On Professor Moore's view this shows that the two persons do not merely judge about their feelings but state that the food really is, or is not, disagreeable, and if they admitted that they only expressed their own feelings—as they most probably would if their statements were challenged<sup>49</sup>—and yet thought that they differed in opinion, they would make a mistake almost too great to be possible. For my own part I venture to believe that most people would find it absurd if they *denied* that they had different opinions about the food. This follows from the fact that the subjective experience has been objectivized in the speech as a quality attributed to the object, and seems the more natural on account of the ambiguous meaning which the word "opinion" has in common parlance, where it is used both for a judgment and for the expression of a feeling.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, in another place Professor Moore himself admits that "a man's *feelings* with regard to an action are not always clearly distinguished from his *opinion* as to whether it is right or wrong," and that "one and the same word is often used, sometimes to express the fact that a man has a *feeling* towards an action, and sometimes to express the fact that he has an *opinion* about it."<sup>51</sup> It seems to me that this admission itself is sufficient to deprive his argument of all evidential value.

Dr. Ross repeats Professor Moore's argument, which he finds unanswerable, and adds the following one of his own against the view that identifies goodness with the presence of some feeling: "If something, without changing its nature, at some moment aroused for the first time the feeling in some mind, we should clearly judge not that the object had then first become good, but that its goodness had then first been apprehended."<sup>52</sup> This is simply implied in the common sense belief in the objectivity of moral values, which I have examined before. But it is certainly in perfect

<sup>48</sup> G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (London, 1922), p. 333 sq.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. H. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (London, 1913), p. 27.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford, 1929), p. 798.

<sup>51</sup> G. E. Moore, *Ethics* (London, s.d.), p. 119.

<sup>52</sup> Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 82 sq.

agreement with my theory of moral values that we may judge an act to have been good before it evoked moral approval in us, since our tendency to feel this emotion, which constitutes its goodness, is something quite different from our actual feeling of it. I agree with Dr. Ross that if, for instance, some one were to become aware of an act of self-denial and admire it, he might "pronounce that it had been good even when no one had been admiring it,"<sup>53</sup> inasmuch as he might attribute to himself a tendency to admire or, as I should say, approve of it, and consequently to the object a tendency to arouse in him the emotion of approval. Such a tendency is exactly on a par with that power of producing aesthetic enjoyment which, according to Dr. Ross, is the characteristic of a beautiful object.<sup>54</sup> And I think that if Professor Moore's objection to my theory of the subjectivity of moral values were sound, it would also apply to Dr. Ross' view of beauty. He says that if the same object produces genuine aesthetic enjoyment in one individual and genuine aesthetic repulsion in another, the same object is both beautiful and ugly, and that consequently our ordinary ideas about beauty and ugliness require revision, since we generally mean by "beautiful" and "ugly" attributes which cannot belong to the same thing.<sup>55</sup> This is quite analogous to my view that the same act can be both good and bad, according as it is approved of by one individual and disapproved of by another. And in either case we may certainly say that the two individuals differ in opinion about that on which they pronounce their judgments. How, then, can Dr. Ross regard Professor Moore's argument against me as "unanswerable"?

The other critical remark that Professor Moore has made on my theory has also reference to the meaning of words. He says it is commonly believed that some moral rules exhibit a *higher* morality than others, and asks what

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Ross (*op. cit.*, p. 128) says that "we cannot judge an object to be beautiful till we think we have been aesthetically thrilled by it," and that "the judgment, while it is not a judgment about the judger's state of mind, is one in which, on the strength of his knowledge of (or opinion about) his state of mind, he ascribes an attribute to an object. And if we ask ourselves what is the common attribute belonging to all beautiful objects, we can, I believe, find none other than the power of producing the kind of enjoyment known as aesthetic." He admits that "we do not *mean* by 'beautiful' an attribute having even this sort of reference to a mind, but something entirely resident in the object, apart from relation to a mind"; but suggests that "we are deceived in thinking that beautiful things have any such common attribute over and above the power of producing aesthetic enjoyment." This view of beauty is precisely similar to my view of moral values, namely, that the moral attributes are ultimately tendencies to feel either moral approval or disapproval interpreted as dynamic tendencies in the phenomena that gave rise to the emotion, and that we are deceived if we think they are anything else.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129 *sq.*

I could mean by saying that A's morality is higher than B's. He gives himself the answer: I could only mean that "A's morality is *my* morality, and B's is not." There is no inconsistency in this: my denial of objective moral standards does not prevent my pronouncing moral judgments which are expressions of my own moral feelings, and whatever terms I use they have to be interpreted accordingly. "But," he adds, "it seems to me quite clear that when we say one morality is higher than another, we do not merely mean that it is our own. We are not merely asserting that it has a certain relation to our own feelings."<sup>56</sup> I have no doubt that this is the case with most people's judgments, but this does not disprove my view that their assumed objectivity is an illusion. Leslie Stephen says each man thinks that his own morality is the *right* morality, and that any other standard is mistaken.<sup>57</sup> But who could maintain that it is so, because it is thought to be so?

The word "higher" has also incited Dr. Rashdall to an attack on me. He says that in one place I have talked about some emotions as "higher emotions"; but the context in which I did so<sup>58</sup> ought to have made it quite plain that I attached no moral significance at all to this expression. He asks why I, on my views, should assume that "the emotions of the reflective are higher or truer than those of the unreflective."<sup>59</sup> I have said no such thing—how could an emotion be "true"? But I have said that the moral consciousness has developed from unreflective to reflective, which implies that the moral emotions have come to be more and more influenced by thought and reasoning.

Though all moral judgments are ultimately based on emotions, the influence that intellectual factors exercise on such judgments is very great indeed.<sup>60</sup> Emotions are determined by cognitions and differ in nature or strength according as the cognitions differ. This has been a very important cause of the variations of moral judgments: the same course of conduct is differently judged of because different ideas are held as to its nature or implications. If a person tells an untruth we are apt to feel indignant;

<sup>56</sup> Moore, *Philosophical Studies*, p. 334 sq.

<sup>57</sup> L. Stephen, *The Science of Ethics* (London, 1882), p. 37.

<sup>58</sup> *Moral Ideas*, ii. 744.

<sup>59</sup> H. Rashdall, *Is Conscience an Emotion?* (London, 1914), p. 123. Cf. *Idem*, *The Theory of Good and Evil*, ii. (London, 1924), p. 413.

<sup>60</sup> A statement of mine (*op. cit.*, i. 20) to the effect that if it could be brought home to people that there is no absolute standard in morality they would perhaps be more apt to listen to the voice of reason, has led Dr. Rashdall (*Is Conscience an Emotion?*, p. 124 sq.) to the exclamation, "The voice of reason," forsooth, when the whole chapter is a diatribe against the notion that Reason has anything to say about conduct." This inaccuracy is astounding. In that very same chapter I have said (*op. cit.*, i. 10), "The influence of intellectual considerations upon moral judgments is certainly immense."

but if, on due consideration of facts, we find that his motive was benevolent, for instance, to save the life of the person to whom the untruth was told, our indignation ceases and may be followed by approval. A moral judgment may be said to be more enlightened in proportion as it is influenced by reflection or knowledge, and the so-called moral evolution largely consists in a gradual progress in enlightenment. . . .

# Linguistic Analysis

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE long been moved to reflect upon what makes reasoning sound. They found it necessary to worry about this matter because they wanted to be certain about certainty. To be certain it is not enough to *feel* convinced, for such feelings are notoriously unreliable. According to the time-honored philosophical tradition we are to put our confidence not in feeling but in incorrigible standards of argument. Lacking these it seems obvious that philosophical explanation, justification, and proof will shift like the sands and leave the structures of reason without foundation.

The question is, how are such standards to be found, and if found, tested? The Linguistic analysts have thought that what is needed is not a search for ideal standards, but a closer look at the way we do in fact reason. It has struck them, too, that our sensibilities concerning argument and proof are not nearly as much a source of confusion as are the philosopher's distortion of the language which he produces in an effort to set things right forever, or the tunnel-vision he suffers from (and recommends to us) when he pronounces upon one style of argument and proof by which to measure *all* reasoning.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

AUSTIN, J. L. *Philosophical Papers*

BLACK, MAX, ed. *Philosophical Analysis*

FLEW, ANTHONY, ed. *Logic and Language*, Series I and II

NOWELL-SMITH, P. H. *Ethics*

RYLE, GILBERT. *The Concept of Mind*

TOULMIN, S. E. *The Place of Reason in Ethics*

WITTGENSTEIN, L. *The Blue and Brown Books*

WITTGENSTEIN, L. *Philosophical Investigations*

# Reason and Faith\*

*It is the heart which is conscious of God, not the reason. This is faith—God evident to the heart and not to the reason. . . . Faith is within the heart, and makes us say not 'Scio', but 'Credo'.—PASCAL*

## 14.1 THE FINITE SCOPE OF REASONING

In all the modes of reasoning analysed so far, we found that the 'reasons' which could logically be given in support of any statement formed a finite chain. In every case, a point was reached beyond which it was no longer possible to give 'reasons' of the kind given until then; and eventually there came a stage beyond which it seemed that no 'reason' of any kind could be given. As a reminder of what I mean: the question, 'Why ought I not to have two wives?', calls to begin with for reasons referring to the existing institutions; secondly, may raise the more general question whether our institution of 'marriage' could be improved by altering it in the direction of polygamy; thirdly, transforms itself into a question about the kind of community in which one would personally prefer to live; and beyond that cannot be reasoned about at all. Now we have been interested throughout in *literal* answers only: so, when faced with requests for reasons of any kind beyond the point at which these ceased to be appropriate we dismissed them as illogical.

In doing so, we were acting on the same principle as the father who, when his child goes on asking, 'Why?', parrot-wise, stops answering its questions and checks him instead. Thus:

CHILD. 'Why are you putting your coat on, Daddy?'

FATHER. 'Because I'm going out.'

\* From *The Place of Reason in Ethics*, by Stephen Toulmin, Chapter 14, pp. 202-221. Some footnotes omitted. Reprinted by permission of the Cambridge University Press, publishers.

- C. 'Why are you going out, Daddy?'
- F. 'I'm going to see Aunt Matilda.'
- C. 'Why?'
- F. 'Because she isn't very well to-day.'
- C. 'Why?'
- F. 'Because she ate something which disagreed with her.'
- C. 'Why?'
- F. 'Well, I suppose she was hungry, and didn't realise the food was bad.'
- C. 'Why?'
- F. 'How should I know?'
- C. 'But why, Daddy?'
- F. 'Oh, don't ask silly questions!'

There are four particularly interesting situations on which we have to adopt this course:

(i) When someone asks, 'How do you explain that?', of something which there is no question of 'explaining', such as the deaths on their birthdays of three children in one family.

(ii) When someone asks, 'But which ought I to do?', of two courses of action between which, morally, there is nothing to choose, and insists on an answer independent of his personal preferences.

(iii) When someone asks, not just 'What reason is there for accepting this explanation?'—meaning 'this' one rather than 'that'—but also, 'What reason is there for accepting any scientific explanation?'

(iv) When someone asks, not just 'Why ought I to do this?'—meaning 'this' course of action rather than 'that' one—but also, 'And why ought I to do anything that is right?'

In each of these situations, no literal question framed in those particular words can arise. And I mean by this more than that such a question does not happen to arise, or that it happens not to be able to arise. I mean that, as a consequence of the ways in which we employ the words concerned, and of the purpose which questions of this form serve, there is logically no place in such a situation for this question—taken literally. And, since we have confined ourselves strictly to literal interpretations up till now, that means no place at all of the kinds that we have been considering.

## 14.2 'LIMITING' QUESTIONS

Nevertheless, one often wants to go on asking such questions, even when there is no literal, rational sense in them. The fact that one does so may be a sign of confusion—a sign that one has just not got the hang of questions of the type concerned—or it may not. For example, you



may use the 'scientific' questions, 'Why does this happen?' and 'How is that to be explained?', as expressions of surprise; and then you will probably be satisfied by a genuinely scientific explanation. Or you may go on asking them after they have ceased to be appropriate, through failing to realise that there is no further room for a scientific explanation; and then you will be satisfied when this fact is pointed out. But you may use the same questions as expressions, not merely of surprise at the unexpected, but also of wonder that there should be any phenomenon of this sort. If you do, then when all possible scientific explanations have been exhausted, when it has been shown that things always happen so, and that the phenomenon about which you are asking is paralleled by familiar phenomena in other fields, you may still feel that your desire for an 'explanation' remains unsatisfied; and, when someone points out that no further scientific explanation can be given, you may come to the conclusion that these things are so wonderful as to be 'beyond human understanding'.

Surprise and curiosity at the antics of the wagtail, or at the winged seeds of the sycamore, may be satisfied by the study of botany or ornithology. No amount of scientific knowledge, however, will still the feeling that birds and trees are *wonderful* things; it will probably only enhance it. And if this is the feeling which prompts your request for an explanation, it will arise again even when science has done all that can be asked of it.

Other feelings may find expression in the same way. The sad deaths of the Jones children may occasion in us both surprise and distress. We soon come to recognise that the question, 'Why did they have to die so young; and all on their birthdays, too?', cannot arise, as a matter of science—that science can do nothing for us in such a situation. And in the absence of a murderer (about whose motives for killing them we might be enquiring) the question cannot arise in *any* form to which there is a literal answer. All the same, we may still want to ask it, and still feel the need of an answer, as an expression of our distress, rather than of our surprise; and indeed, in such a context, it is in this sense that one would most naturally interpret the question.

It is questions of this kind with which I am concerned in the present chapter—questions expressed in a form borrowed from a familiar mode of reasoning, but not doing the job which they normally do within that mode of reasoning. It is characteristic of them that only a small change is required, either in the form of the question, or in the context in which it is asked, in order to bring it unquestionably back into the scope of its apparent mode of reasoning. But it is equally characteristic of them that the way of answering suggested by the form of words employed will never completely satisfy the questioner, so that he continues to ask the question even after the resources of the apparent mode of reasoning have been

exhausted. Questions of this kind I shall refer to as 'limiting questions': they are of particular interest when one is examining the limits and boundaries of any mode of reasoning—and of ethical reasoning in particular.

### 14.3 THE PECULIARITIES OF 'LIMITING QUESTIONS'

I want to point out three peculiarities of questions of this type, which make the ways of answering them quite different from the ways of answering more literal questions. These peculiarities I shall then illustrate in two instances:

(i) Our usage provides no standard interpretation of such questions. Their form suggests a meaning of a familiar kind, but the situations in which they are asked are such that they cannot have that meaning. The form of words may therefore express any of a varied selection of personal predicaments, and we can only find out as we go along what is 'behind' the question.

(ii) If the question were to be interpreted literally—that is, by reference to its apparent logical form—we should expect there to be genuinely alternative answers, each applicable over a limited range of cases. Within the apparent mode of reasoning, all questions require a definite choice to be made—e.g. between two theories or social practices, between one moral decision and another, or between one scientific prediction and another. A 'limiting question', however, does not present us with genuine alternatives to choose between: it is expressed in such a way that the only reply within the apparent mode of reasoning is (for instance), 'Well, isn't the "right" just what one "ought" to do?'

(iii) Finally, a 'limiting question' is not flagrantly 'extrarational' in its form. It is not like the questions in Blake's *Tyger*, which no one would ever dream of trying to answer literally:

What the hammer? What the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? What dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

There is therefore always the urge to give it the kind of answer which its form appears to demand. However, either to answer or to refuse to answer in this way will leave the questioner equally dissatisfied. If you refuse, his desire for such an answer remains unstilled: if you answer, there is nothing to stop the question from arising again about your reply.

Consider a familiar instance. One learns to ask the questions, 'How is it supported?' and 'What does it rest on?', in all kinds of everyday situations; for instance, when talking to a gardener about his peach-tree,

or to an engineer about some piece of machinery. In these familiar situations, there is always the possibility that the object referred to might collapse if there were nothing to support it, nothing for it to rest on: or, at any rate, in all these instances we can understand what it would mean to say that it had 'collapsed'. But, if you start with a familiar object and ask, 'What does it rest on?', and continue to ask of each new object mentioned, 'And what does that rest on?', you will eventually reach the answer, 'The solid earth,' and after that you cannot ask the question any more—in that sense anyway.

In the everyday sense, the question, 'What holds the earth up?', is a 'limiting question', having all the peculiarities I have referred to:

(i) If someone does ask it, it is not at all clear what he wants to know, in the way it is if he asks, 'What holds your peach-tree up?' In ordinary cases, the form of the question and the nature of the situation between them determine the meaning of the question: here they cannot do so, and one can only guess at what is prompting it.

(ii) The different answers to the question, 'What holds your peach-tree up?', are intelligible enough, and one can imagine a peach-tree's 'falling down': but neither of these things is the case when someone asks, 'What holds the earth up?'

(iii) Still, there is a strong desire to take the question literally, in a way in which one would never take Blake's questions literally. But, if we do, it will get us nowhere. If we answer 'An elephant', the questioner can ask, 'And what holds the elephant up?'; if we now answer 'A tortoise', the question arises again; and there is now way of stopping its recurrence this side of infinity.

We might of course answer, 'Nothing', and, when the questioner protested, 'Nothing? But it must be held up by something', we might explain to him his error, pointing out that he was misunderstanding the nature of questions of the form, 'What holds it up?', and failing to see that this form of question cannot be asked of 'the earth' at all. If the question had arisen from such a misunderstanding, the questioner would be satisfied by this; and, to the extent that it did satisfy him, we could conclude that the enquiry had arisen in this way, that the motive prompting the question had been the perplexity of misunderstanding. But he might not be so easily satisfied. The question might be a 'cover' for some other feeling; say, for an hysterical apprehensiveness about the future. This could not be settled by any literal answer to his question, or by any rational analysis of the question itself: in fact, the only type of reasoning likely to make any impression on him would be psychoanalytic reasoning.

As a second instance, the question, 'Why ought one to do what is right?', shares these same peculiarities:

(i) The form of the question and the situation in which it is asked do not determine the meaning of the question, in the way in which they determine the meaning of a question like, 'Why ought I to give this book back to Jones?'

(ii) There are no 'alternative answers', in the way in which there are to a typically ethical question.

(iii) Still, the question does seem to call for an ethical answer—even though whatever you say can be queried in its turn, and so *ad infinitum*.

Once again we might explain to the questioner how the notions of 'right' and 'obligation' arise, pointing out that their origins are such as to make the sentence, 'One ought to do what is right', a truism. And again this might satisfy him, showing that it had been the perplexity born of misunderstanding which had prompted his question. But again our answer might leave him unmoved: and, when this happened, we should have to conclude that the motive behind this question was only being obliquely expressed.

Since, when one is faced with a 'limiting question', there is this additional uncertainty about the way in which it is to be interpreted—since the possible concealed motives for asking a 'limiting question' are many and varied—one cannot help being at a loss to begin with. The fact that such questions have no fixed, literal meaning means that there is no fixed, literal way of answering them, and one just has to wait and see what it is the questioner wants. If, for example, someone asks, 'Why ought one to do what is right?', the answers which can be given are of two kinds. Either they must be tailor-made to fit the questioner—in which case they have no universal application—or they must abandon all pretence of literalness, and take on the elusive, allusive quality of poetry. In the first case, they can at the best take account of the questioner's professional preoccupations, drawing attention (for instance) to analogies between ethical and biological concepts, if he is a biologist, to analogies between ethical and psychological concepts, if he is a psychologist, and so on.<sup>1</sup> In the second, they are to be judged less like the questions in the mode of reasoning whose form they have borrowed, than like Blake's poems—by their impact, that is, and not by excessively intellectual standards.

If the questioner insists on having an answer which is at the same time literal and unique, there is nothing further one can do. The question, 'What is the intellectual basis of ethics?', posed by Dr C. H. Waddington in the introduction to his symposium, *Science and Ethics*, is a good example. In substance, this question is similar to 'Why ought one to do what is

<sup>1</sup> This would be the peg on which to hang a discussion of the so-called 'scientific' theories of ethics, but this would be too much of a digression.

right? ', but the use of the word 'intellectual' reinforces the demand for a rational, literal answer—and the whole of the discussion which follows makes it clear that the questioner wants a straightforward answer to an oblique question. And, faced with this demand, we can only answer as Wittgenstein answered, 'This is a terrible business—just terrible! You can at best stammer when you talk of it.'

#### 14.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF 'LIMITING QUESTIONS'

Some philosophers argue that all utterances which cannot be taken literally ought to be done away with; as though everything which is 'nonsense' to them were also, necessarily, dangerous nonsense. And no doubt, where 'limiting questions' arise solely out of logical confusions, there are some grounds for wishing them out of existence. In other cases, however, they are not to be argued away. That one should learn to tell such limiting questions from questions in the mode of reasoning whose form they borrow, may well be desirable. But that we should be exhorted to stop asking them altogether, is ridiculous. The feeling of urgency behind so many of them, the insistence with which they recur, itself suggests that no good is done by bottling them up; and, provided that one recognises them for what they are, what can there be against our asking them?

Indeed, such questions have a positive value, as both psychology and history show. Psychologically, they help us to *accept* the world, just as the explanations of science help us to *understand* it. We recognise that the question, 'Why did they have to die so young?', may be hardly more than a cry of distress arising from the desire to reject an unpleasant fact; and, if this is the case, are not Pascal's 'limiting questions' the expression of distress also, even though of a distress which is at once more general and deeply rooted?—

When I consider the briefness of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and behind it, the small space I fill, or even see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces which I know not, and which know not me, I am afraid. . . . Who has set me here? By whose order and arrangement have this place and this time been allotted me? . . .

Again, the example recorded by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*—as Dmitri's dream—shows how importunately such questioning may arise:

He was driving somewhere in the steppes. . . . Not far off was a village, he could see the black huts, and half the huts were burnt down, there were only the charred beams sticking up. As they drove in, there were peasant women drawn up along the road. . . .

'Why are they crying? Why are they crying?', Mitya [Dmitri] asked, as they dashed gaily by.

'It's the babe', answered the driver, 'the babe weeping.'

And Mitya was struck by his saying, in his peasant way, 'the babe', and he liked the peasant's calling it a 'babe'. There seemed more pity in it.

'But why is it weeping?' Mitya persisted stupidly, 'why are its little arms bare? Why don't they wrap it up?'

'The babe's cold, its little clothes are frozen and don't warm it.'

'But why is it? Why?' foolish Mitya still persisted.

'Why, they're poor people, burnt out. They've no bread. They're begging because they've been burnt out.'

'No, no,' Mitya, as it were, still did not understand. 'Tell me why it is those poor mothers stand there? Why are people poor? Why is the babe poor? Why is the steppe barren? Why don't they hug each other and kiss? Why don't they sing songs of joy? Why are they so dark from black misery? Why don't they feed the babe?'

And he felt that, though his questions were unreasonable and senseless, yet he wanted to ask just that; and he had to ask it just in that way. And he felt that a passion of pity, such as he had never known before, was rising in his heart, that he wanted to cry, that he wanted to do something for them all, so that the babe should weep no more, so that the dark-faced, dried-up mother should not weep, that no one should shed tears again from that moment. . . .

'I've had a good dream, gentlemen,' he said in a strange voice, with a new light, as of joy, in his face.

The importance of such questions can also be seen from history. Had we never asked questions extra-rationally, we should never have come to ask them rationally. All our typically rational methods of argument have developed out of less typically rational prototypes—science, for instance, grew out of magic and primitive religion—and it is illuminating to contrast the undeveloped prototype with its descendant, the developed mode of reasoning.

There are many grounds for uncertainty about the future; and this 'uncertainty' may be of several kinds. It may be an inability to predict particular phenomena correctly: it may be 'an anxious fear of future events' (which is how Hume described the source of the 'primary religion of mankind'). At first, these types of uncertainty are treated alike. The same men, methods and notions are expected to be able to deal with them all; and are used to allay the uncertainty, whether it is the outcome of surprise and curiosity, or of fear and wonder. At this stage, the same questions are asked and the same answers are given, whether it is exact knowledge of the future or reassurance that is wanted.

It is only recently that there has been a special, separate and differentiated way of dealing with requests for exact knowledge; and this has to

be remembered, for instance, when we are trying to understand the writings of the Greeks. Much of what seems to us obscure or confused is clarified when we recognise that it is intended, not as pure 'logic', pure 'science', pure 'ethics', or pure 'theology' (as we know these subjects), but as an amalgam, doing as far as it can the jobs of all its descendants.

By the present time, matters of science have become almost wholly divorced from the religious questions of which they were originally a part: we have a special means of obtaining exact knowledge about the future. But that does not mean that the desire for *reassurance* has gone. Indeed, it certainly remains, especially over events like the deaths of the Jones children; and all who have not taken the rationalist vow of silence will continue to ask some (at any rate) of these 'limiting questions'.

#### 14.5 MATTERS OF FAITH

Not only shall we continue to ask these questions, but we shall genuinely want answers to them. And, of the answers which are given to us, we shall regard some as being better than others. And some of them, no doubt, will really be better than others. Some, that is to say, will give us a reassurance which will not be disappointed; will allay our fear of 'the eternity before and behind the brief span' [Pascal] of our lives, and of 'the infinite immensity' of space; will provide comfort in the face of distress; and will answer our questions in a way which will not seem in retrospect to have missed their point.

Now, provided that the answers given are good answers, by this sort of standard, what logical justification can there be for dismissing them? Of course 'theological' arguments, and 'religious' questions and answers—those with which we are concerned here—are on quite a different footing, as a matter of logic, from scientific and ethical arguments, questions and answers. But it is only if we suppose that religious arguments pretend (say) to provide exact knowledge of the future—so competing with science on its own ground—that we can be justified in attempting to apply to them the logical criteria appropriate to scientific explanations; and only if we do this that we have any grounds for concluding (with Ayer) that 'all utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical', or (with Freud) that religion is 'an illusion'. Provided that we remember that religion has functions other than that of competing with science and ethics on their own grounds, we shall understand that to reject all religious arguments for this reason is to make a serious logical blunder—an error as great as that of taking figurative phrases literally, or of supposing that the mathematical theory of numbers (say) has any deep, religious

significance. There are two such errors, as Pascal points out—‘first, to take everything literally; secondly, to take everything spiritually’—and it is asking for trouble if one ignores the difference between questions of science and ethics, which are matters of *reason*, and things like the existence of God, which are matters of *faith*.

What is the nature of this distinction between ‘faith’ and ‘reason’? To begin with, it is essential to rule out of account those things which are often called ‘matters of faith’ or ‘articles of faith’, by transference: things which are really only matters of fact about which the evidence is inconclusive, but over which one holds a dogmatic opinion out of pride. Examples of this kind—such as, ‘It was for him an article of faith that any one Englishman was a match for any ten Frenchmen’—only confuse the issue. Again, not all ‘limiting questions’ are ‘religious’,<sup>1</sup> and not all ‘religious’ questions are ‘limiting’: it is only over those on the boundaries between religion, science and ethics that real difficulties arise, and it is on these that I shall concentrate.

If one is discussing genuine ‘matters of faith’ (like the sacredness, for the Cambodians, of white elephants), then there is no question of advancing ‘reasons’ for individual assertions, of weighing the evidence for different hypotheses, and so on. To talk of bringing evidence of this kind for ‘matters of faith’ does not make sense. Over matters of faith, one does not ‘believe’ or ‘disbelieve’ individual propositions: one ‘accepts’ or ‘rejects’ complete notions. Indeed, we might describe the distinction between ‘faith’ and ‘reason’ in these terms—belief as a matter of reason is *belief of* a proposition of some kind: belief as a matter of faith is *belief in* a notion of some kind.

Furthermore, since those questions of religion which make use of everyday, scientific or ethical notions are ‘limiting questions’, this use can only be *figurative* (or, to use Pascal’s alternative term, ‘spiritual’). The question of God’s existence is often discussed by philosophers in a way which would only be appropriate, if it were the literal counterpart of the question, ‘Are there any one-eyed cats?’; and, no doubt, anyone who does this will be forced to conclude that the Argument from Design, as given (say) in Paley’s *Natural Theology*, is unconvincing. But this is to misapprehend its functions: to overlook the radical differences between the kinds of answer the two questions require. The inference from ‘appearances of design in nature’ to the existence of an ‘omnipotent,

<sup>1</sup> The questions Dmitri Karamazov asks in his dream (cf. § 14.4 above) are in some ways not typically religious: the very fact that he himself thinks of them as ‘unreasonable and senseless’ marks them off from the typically religious class of questions. It is natural for anyone who asks ‘limiting questions’ in a religious manner, by contrast, to emphasise the continuity of his questions with, say, ethical and scientific questions, and to treat theology as a kind of ‘super-science’ having ‘super-ethical’ implications.



omniscient and omni-present Deity ' is not an argument for the existence of an especially powerful and knowing animal, liable to turn up anywhere at any moment. It consists (and we can quote Paley's own subtitle to illustrate this) in accumulating ' evidences of the existence and attributes of the Deity from the appearances of Nature '. The existence of God, one might argue (though here I doubt whether Paley would follow us), is not something to demand *evidence for*; nor is the sentence, ' God exists ', one to be believed if, and only if, the evidence for its truth is good enough. The very last question to ask about God is *whether* He exists. Rather, we must first accept the notion of ' God ': and then we shall be in a position to point to *evidences of* His existence.

How uncomfortable Paley seems when he is trying to refute by pure argument the astronomical account of the solar system! How much more at home he is when, instead of tinkering inexpertly with science, he expresses his wonder at the marvels of nature!

Were there no example in the world of contrivance except that of the *eye*, it would be alone sufficient to support the conclusion which we draw from it, as to the necessity of an intelligent Creator. . . . Its coats and humours, constructed, as the lenses of a telescope are constructed, for the refraction of rays of light to a point, which forms the proper action of the organs; (etc., etc.) . . . . . compose altogether an apparatus, a system of parts, a preparation of means, so manifest in their design, so exquisite in their contrivance, so successful in their issue, so precious and so infinitely beneficial in their use, as, in my opinion, to bear down all doubt that can be raised upon the subject.

Once more, Dostoevsky has given us, in *The Brothers Karamazov*—to be exact, in Ivan's confession of faith to his saintly brother, Alyosha—the classic expression of these facts:

What's strange, what would be marvellous, is not that God should really exist; the marvel is that such an idea, the idea of the necessity of God, should enter the head of such a savage, vicious beast as man. So holy is it, so touching, so wise and so great a credit it does to man. As for me, I've long resolved not to think whether man created God or God man. . . . And so I omit all the hypotheses. For what are we aiming at now? I am trying to explain as quickly as possible my essential nature, that is what manner of man I am, what I believe in, and for what I hope, that's it, isn't it? And therefore I tell you that I accept God simply. . . . I can't expect to understand about God. I acknowledge humbly that I have no faculty for settling such questions. . . . And I advise you never to think about it either, my dear Alyosha, especially about God, whether He exists or not. All such questions are utterly inappropriate. . . . I accept God and am glad to, and what's more, I accept His wisdom, His purpose—which are utterly beyond our ken; I believe in the eternal harmony in which they say we shall one day be blended. . . .

## 14.6 SPIRITUAL AND LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS

In this passage, Dostoevsky not only shows his grasp of the differences between factual and religious 'belief': he also gives us—in Ivan's references to 'God's purpose'—a perfect example of a concept used 'spiritually', as opposed to 'literally'.

If, through a window, we see a man going through an extraordinary sequence of acrobatics, crawling around with his head on the floor, peering behind the cupboards and so on, we may want to inquire whether there is any 'purpose' in his actions or not. And, if we are told that he is looking for his front stud, we shall be able to 'understand' his previous antics, and anticipate his future ones—for instance, his giving up the search and picking a new one out of the stud-box on his dressing-table. Again, if we are shown the pieces of antler found in the neolithic workings at Grime's Graves in Norfolk, we may ask what their 'purpose' was; and again, by pointing to the finger-marks and worn areas on the antlers, an archaeologist may indicate the kinds of operation for which they were used, and so enable us to reconstruct a picture of the neolithic miner, lying in the mine, with his tallow lamp burning beside him, gripping the antler 'pick' with his left hand, and hammering it into the wall of chalk and flint with the stone held in his right.

These two examples illustrate the literal use of the notion of 'purpose'. In each case, our understanding of the concept depends on there being a certain human background, a situation in which people are doing things that satisfy some recognisable need. In each case, the recognition of the human need met by the actions is the means of answering our questions about 'purpose'.

It is quite otherwise with questions about the 'purpose' of the universe. The ordinary procedure for answering questions about 'purpose' is no longer applicable: questions about the 'purpose' of the universe are therefore 'limiting questions'. And the literal sense of 'purpose' is even less appropriate in discussions of 'God's purpose'. In such cases, the notion of 'purpose' has to be understood 'spiritually'. Such questions are expressions, not of any desire for exact knowledge, or for the ability to anticipate and predict particular future events; they show, rather, a desire for reassurance, for a general confidence about the future. In consequence, the answers to all such questions are necessarily 'spiritual' rather than 'literal', matters of faith, not matters of reason. Reason, through science, tells us what is to be expected. Faith, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, is concerned with 'the confidence of things which are hoped for, and the certainty of things which are not seen'—where of course 'things not seen' has a 'spiritual' meaning also,

and does not mean 'things that one cannot see because they are so small, or because they are transparent, like glass'.

All this is not to say that there is no 'reasoning' to be done in theology and religion—it would be highly paradoxical to declare that the writings of Augustine and Aquinas (for example) were not 'reasoned'. It is only to mark the differences between the kinds of 'reasoning' one can sensibly call for, in science and ethics, on the one hand, and in religion, on the other. Pascal remarked, as acutely as anyone, on the nature of these distinctions. He was so struck by them, in fact, that he went too far in the direction of 'fideism': he wished to deny to all religious arguments the title of 'reasoning', on the same grounds as those which prompt the 'imperativists' to deny that title to ethical arguments. 'Who then shall blame Christians', he wrote, 'who confess a religion for which they cannot give reasons, for being unable to give reasons for their belief? . . . If they proved it, they would belie their words; it is the lack of proofs which shows that they do not lack understanding'—and, if by 'proofs' and 'reasons' we understand 'scientific proofs and reasons' (for instance) how true, how necessarily true, this is! He is nearer the mark, and more helpful, when he writes, 'against the objection that the Scripture has no method':

The heart and the mind both have their method. That of the mind is according to principle and demonstration; that of the heart is otherwise. One does not show that one ought to be loved by setting forth in order the causes of love: that would be ridiculous.

Jesus Christ and St Paul have the method of charity, not of the intellect; for they wished to enkindle, not to instruct. So also with St Augustine. This method consists chiefly in enlarging on every point which bears on the end, so as to keep this end constantly in view.

By this he reminds us that, when we are discussing matters of religion, we must seek less for a rational demonstration than for *evidences of* their truth; and that it would be misunderstanding the purpose of religion and the nature of religious 'truth'—and so in a sense self-contradictory—to demand an answer obtained literally, by 'the method of the intellect', to a question meant spiritually, and calling for 'the method of the heart'.

#### 14.7 FAITH AND REASON IN ETHICS

There remarks about faith and reason have been very general, and we must not leave the subject without returning to our proper field. Let us therefore examine the boundary between religion and ethics—so as to see how, in this sphere, reason marches upon faith.

We encountered 'limiting questions' in three kinds of ethical situation:

(i) When it has been pointed out that an action conforms unambiguously to a recognised social practice, there is no more room for the justification of the action through ethical reasoning: if someone asks, 'Why ought I to give this book back to Jones to-day?', and is given the answer, 'Because you promised to', there is no room within the ethical mode of reasoning for him to ask, 'But why ought I to *really*?'—this question is a 'limiting question'.

(ii) When there is nothing to choose on moral grounds between two courses of action, the only reasoned answer which can be given to the question, 'Which ought I to do?', is one taking account of the agent's own preferences—'If you do *A*, then so-and-so, if you do *B*, then such-and-such: and it's up to you to decide which you prefer'—and if someone now insists on a unique answer, independent of his preferences, his question is again 'limiting'.

(iii) When someone asks, perfectly generally, 'Why ought one to do what is right?', and is not satisfied with the answer that the sentence, 'You ought to do what is right', expresses a truism, his question is also a 'limiting' one.

In each of these cases, the logical pattern is similar. In each, ethical reasoning first does for the questioner all that can be asked of it, exhausting the literal answers to his question, and making it clear how far there is any literal sense in his asking what he 'ought' to do. In each case, when this is finished, it is clear that something remains to be done: that moral reasoning, while showing what ought (literally) to be done, has failed to satisfy the questioner. Although he may come to recognise intellectually what he 'ought' to do, he does not feel like doing it—his heart is not in it.

This conflict is manifested in his use of 'limiting questions'. As long as these are taken literally, they seem nonsensical: whether he says, 'I know I promised to, but ought I to, *really*?', or 'Yes, yes; but which ought I *really* to do, *A* or *B*?', or 'But why ought one to do *anything* that is right?', he is ostensibly querying something which it makes no sense to question—literally.

In each case, however, his question comes alive again as soon as one takes it 'spiritually', as a religious question. Over those matters of fact which are not to be 'explained' scientifically, like the deaths in the Jones family, the function of religion is to help us resign ourselves to them—and so feel like accepting them. Likewise, over matters of duty which are not to be justified further in ethical terms, it is for religion to help us embrace them—and so feel like accepting them. In all the three situations referred to, therefore, religious answers may still be appropriate, even when the resources of ethical reasoning are exhausted:

- (i) 'Why ought I to give back this book?'
  - 'Because you promised.'
  - 'But why ought I to, *really*?'
  - 'Because it would be sinful not to.'
  - 'And what if I were to commit such a sin?'
  - 'That would be to cut yourself off from God', etc.
- (ii) 'Which ought I to do, *A* or *B*?'
  - 'There's nothing to choose between them, morally speaking; it's up to you, but if I were you I should do *B*.'
  - 'But which ought I *really* to do?'
  - 'You ought to do *B*: that is the course more pleasing to God, and will bring you the truest happiness in the end.'
- (iii) 'Why ought one to do what is right, anyway?'
  - 'That is a question which cannot arise, for it is to query the very definition of "right" and "ought".'
  - 'But why *ought* one to?'
  - 'Because it is God's will.'
  - 'And why should one do His will?'
  - 'Because it is in the nature of a created being to do the will of its Creator', etc.

#### 14.8 THE INDEPENDENCE OF ETHICS AND RELIGION

This kind of thing is familiar enough, and only needs to be pointed out. Where there is a good moral reason for choosing one course of action rather than another, morality is not to be contradicted by religion. Ethics provides the *reasons* for choosing the 'right' course: religion helps us to put our *hearts* into it. There is no more need for religion to compete with ethics on its own ground than with science on its: all three have their hands full doing their own jobs without poaching. In this respect, we can take over into the discussion of ethics Pascal's remarks about the relations between faith and reason in science:

Faith indeed says that which the senses do not say, but not the contrary of that which they say: faith is above the senses, not counter to them.

This point is sometimes expressed by saying, 'We believe God's will to be good, not because it happens to be *His* will, but because it *is* good'; and it only reflects the difference between the functions of ethics and religion. If an action were not right, it would not be 'God's will' that we should do it. Or again, if an action were not right, it would not be for religion to make us feel like doing it.

Such a non-aggression pact between religion, science and ethics may seem to restrict the scope of religion. But it is a self-denying ordinance rather than an external restriction; and it is to be wished for, not just as a matter of logic, but also as being of eventual advantage to religion itself. For the success of morality in its own task, unhampered by religious irrelevances, will leave us less preoccupied with 'merely material' ends, less circumscribed by the need for taboos and conventions, and therefore freer to concentrate on the choice of our ways of life. And this means more scope for faith in the very spheres in which it is most important—greater freedom for us to try and live 'the life of the saints'—remembering, with Pascal, that

Man's ordinary life is like that of the saints. Both seek satisfaction, and they differ only in the object in which they set it.

One last comment: you are, of course, at liberty to argue that, while religion and religious considerations may be of help to those who feel a need for them, they can be dispensed with by those who do not; that, though religion may help some people to put their hearts into virtue, many people can do so without religion; and that the more people who can the better. But this last is an ethical reflection, not a logical one; and you are not entitled in consequence to rule out all religious and theological judgements as logically improper.

There are many people who do not play bridge, and who in fact consider it a shameful waste of time and energy; but they do not conclude, either that all solutions of bridge problems are therefore invalid, or that it is nonsense to talk of them as 'valid' or 'invalid'. There are some lightning calculators who have no use for the ordinary methods of arithmetic, since they get to the answer more quickly without them—and how much easier our schooldays would be if we could all do the same!—but they do not claim that their talents are enough to invalidate all arithmetical proofs. There are some people, for that matter, whose characters are angelic—who hardly seem to need to consider what they ought to do, since they do this instinctively; these people do not feel that same need as the rest of us for ethics and ethical reasoning; and the more of them, also, the better. But we should not allow their existence as an argument against the logical propriety of all ethical arguments: it is simply irrelevant.

In this last chapter, I have been examining the logical characteristics of certain types of religious argument: namely, those which are most intimately related to our earlier discussions about ethics. This I am entitled to do whatever my personal views about the importance of religion. The propriety of particular arguments within a mode of reasoning

is one thing: the value of the mode of reasoning as a whole is another. And while a discussion of the first can properly appear in a book of logic, one's views on the second would be out of place, and belong rather in an autobiography.

JOHN WISDOM

# Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psycho-Analysis\*

... PHILOSOPHERS ARE notorious for reminding us of occasions on which what looked like gold was not, what seemed a man turned out to be a puppet. From these disappointments they pretend to demonstrate the impossibility of knowledge. Poets, dramatists, and novelists continually present the shocking continuities between love and hate, devotion and infatuation. Do they demonstrate the impossibility of love? Shall we be sensible and hard-headed and say that love, whether a lover's or a mother's, just *is* a sort of infatuation? Or shall we, rather than accept this denigration, say that love doesn't exist? Shall we accept the arguments of Proust and others and find ourselves in a world where dear despair is the somewhat sickly but only support of failing hope? Or shall we like Dostoevsky, Freud, and many other explorers of the spiritual world, have the courage to refuse to deny the evil and also the further courage not then to deny the good.

The worst of it is Dostoevsky is extremely confusing. Behind the summer-houses a thunder storm is always coming up; in those enormous tenements where beside the remains of the last meal stands always another bottle of champagne, everything dissolves into what it was not. When someone remarked upon this lately I replied 'Well what about Freud? Doesn't he put some order into the chaos?' 'Yes', he said 'yes, that's true but somehow...' 'Somehow what?' I said, 'Is it that under the chapter headings "The Psychology of Errors", "Fixation upon Traumas", "The Theory of the Libido" something is lost? The scientific terms give

\* From *Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis*, by John Wisdom, pp. 261-282. Reprinted by permission of Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., Oxford.



a wider but too distant view of reality—so distant that we no longer feel the sorrow and the joy. And as the detail of the concrete diminishes one loses grasp of what it is that is being talked about'. 'Yes, it's something like that,' he said. 'Well,' I said 'isn't the remedy for that to move to and fro from the concrete, presented by the artist, to the general, presented by the scientist'.

But this of course is easier said than done.

Besides the battle with illusion, disillusion and despair is something more personal than this. However able the artist, however great the insight he gives into someone else, this need not give insight into one's self. We have seen something of why people say that one knows oneself in a way no one else can. But it is notorious also that it is hard to see oneself as others see one, and this implies that it is hard to see oneself as one can see others, that the advice 'Know yourself' is not easy to follow. In psychoanalysis a determined attempt is made to do this with someone else's help. Concrete detail after concrete detail is assembled and slowly, very slowly, the bewildering chaos comes into order and the shifting shadows begin to have shape. But there are strong forces opposing this.

It is not only that the incidents one needs to recall are half forgotten. Added to this and bound up with it is fact that there exists already a way of telling the story which selects, emphasizes and assembles things in certain constellations. For instance, the story is told in terms of loving certain people and hating others. You loved your kind mother and your good father and your little sister, who was weaker than yourself. You hated the people next door who poisoned the cat, and you despised Uncle Jack who disgraced the family name by selling on a prodigious scale, bogus shares. You despised him of course although he drove so magnificent a motor car. You loved your sister. Of course there were occasions when you lost your temper with her, but these were temporary aberrations when perhaps she broke your best soldiers or tore your best book. So far so good. It is only later, perhaps, that the adequacy of this picture begins to be suspected. You love your wife. You are of course sometimes angry with her. And here you are sorry to say that you are sometimes extraordinarily angry with her, unreasonably angry, much angrier than you would be with someone else who had done what she did. Perhaps of course she has done the same thing before. But sometimes she has not. And anyway why were you so angry from the first? You might be tempted to say sometimes that you detest your wife if it were not that you love her and love her very much. And now you come to think of it, though sometimes your sister was very provoking it is also true that you were sometimes angry with her about very little, and no less so when grown-ups in a certain tone of voice *again* said that she was

smaller and weaker than you. Did you really detest her for the love she won so easily?

The suggestion is preposterous. But is it pointless? Isn't it in fact extremely pointed? The suggestion that a hat is a monument, that legal discussion is verbal, that knowledge of the minds of others isn't really knowledge are all preposterous. But they are not pointless. They force us to recognize things familiar but unrecognized. Psychological suggestions also, preposterous as they sometimes are, reveal to our dismay and our relief things we had felt creeping in the shadows and now must see in light.

Metaphysical paradoxes, such as 'Ethical discussion is propaganda', 'Reflective thought is thought about words', are dangerous and need to be balanced by the re-assertion of the old truths in their opposites. Psychological paradoxes are dangerous too and call for a dialectic process in which they are balanced. For example, the psychological paradox 'We are all mad' needs to be balanced by its opposite 'We are all sane' and by the re-assertion of 'Some of us are mad but some of us are not'—only now the old truth will no longer blind us to the continuities the paradoxes have revealed. The paradox that you hated your sister needs to be balanced by the re-assertion of the old truth that you loved her and the new truth that you loved her more than you knew when long ago you built houses in the trees or went pig-sticking in the orchard with her.

To gain a new apprehension of any part of reality we have to shake off old habits of apprehension crystallized probably in a well-known mode of presentation. In a recent book *Pleasure from Pictures* the author says in a note on the Impressionists 'They *found* (italics mine) that light can change colour completely, that a red dress may contain other colours than red'.<sup>1</sup> People were at first taken aback by the Impressionists' pictures. They had never seen trees like that. And yet they must have often had before their eyes what the Impressionists found. Oscar Wilde says 'There may have been fogs for centuries in London. I dare say there were. But no one saw them, and we do not know anything about them. They did not exist till Art had invented them.'<sup>2</sup>

It is well recognized that poets may use words in unusual ways to present what they see when in a childlike and yet grownup experience they look at things afresh.

But it is not so well recognized that people who are speaking or writing in prose may be doing the same. And yet they too may be trying to re-explore the manifold of particular things without seeing them always

<sup>1</sup> Pamela Strain, *Pleasure from Pictures*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *The Decay of Lying*, p. 37.

in the constellations imposed upon them by old names. They too may feel the need to free themselves from the power of a name. For example, the metaphilosopher struck by the peculiarity of a discussion does well to avoid calling it by its usual name—for example 'discussion of fact'. He may try a new name, for example 'verbal discussion'. This too will have its dangers unless he vigorously imagines, pictures, the faces, gestures, tones, words and circumstances of those taking part in the discussion and allows this to suggest to him the faces, gestures, tones, words of those taking part in other discussions. This way he may reach associations which might never have occurred to him, note features, note likenesses and contrasts, which he might never have noticed had he at once applied the usual name or too obstinately applied a new name to the discussion going on before him. For that name would have been powerful to lead him along familiar lines and thus to prevent his seeing new constellations. In trying to lead someone else to the unusual associations he has come upon the philosopher may apply not the usual name to what he was thinking about but an unusual one. So it comes about that in trying to express what they have seen metaphysical philosophers say surprising things. So do other philosophers. So do poets, novelists, and psychoanalysts, so, in general, do those who are philosophers, in the wide sense that they reflect on what has been observed in order to gain a new and greater apprehension of reality.

Imagine that till now all maps have been drawn on Mercator's projection. Mr. A has received as a wedding present what is in fact a map of the world on an extraordinary projection. Unfortunately he can make neither head nor tail of it, it is to him a meaningless pattern. However when his friend Mr. P, the philosopher takes a look at the thing he says 'Why can't you see, it's a map of the world'. These simple words may be enough. They may work on Mr. A like magic. But they may not. For he may say 'Whatever d'you mean?' because he has never dreamed of a map except on Mercator's projection. He has never seen Africa look like that. It will then be necessary to wean him from his unsophisticated conception of a map by putting before him first mild and then bolder and bolder departures from Mercator's projection. It may be only at the end of this procedure that he says 'Ha! Yes, yes I see it now' and as he says these words the pattern may look different to him as well as being no longer meaningless. Mr. A has made a discovery. The character of his discovery is worth careful consideration. When Mr. P said 'It's a map of the world' this came as a surprise to Mr. A. Just why it was a surprise to him is worth careful consideration. Mr. P justified his statement. The character of his justification is worth careful consideration.

Imagine that Mr. S, a scientist, points to a blank sheet of paper and

says to Mr. A 'That's a map of the world'. Mr. A says 'What do you mean?' Mr. S then holds the sheet of paper before the fire and the invisible ink then shows up and there appears to the astonished eyes of Mr. A a map, a map in the ordinary conventional sense of a presentation on Mercator's projection of land and water. The discovery, the surprise, and the justification are very different in this case from what they were in the first case. Mr. S is able to astonish Mr. A because he knows something about the reactions of that about which he and Mr. A are speaking which Mr. A does not know. Mr. P did not in this way know anything that Mr. A didn't know and couldn't already see for himself.

Imagine now that Mr. M, a clear, acute and mathematically-minded man, points to a large-scale and extremely intricate map of the town through which he and Mr. B have been wandering all the afternoon and says 'That's a map of the place we were in this afternoon.' 'You don't say so', says Mr. B. 'Why yes', says Mr. M. 'Remember the cathedral? Here it is. From the cathedral ran that wide street with tram lines down to a canal didn't it? Here you are . . .' and so on. Mr. B is delighted. He hadn't realized that there was a map, a quite ordinary map of the place that had so bewildered him that very afternoon. Without producing any rabbits from a hat Mr. M is able to astonish Mr. B by showing him what he hadn't seen without showing him anything he hadn't seen. And unlike Mr. P Mr. M is able to do this by a proof on perfectly conventional lines. He doesn't have to stretch or narrow or press in any way the use of the word 'map' or any other word.

It is easy to see that there is a continuous connection between the two cases of discovery by reflection. For instead of imagining that the map before Mr. M and Mr. A is on perfectly conventional lines we may imagine that it is on slightly unconventional lines and then that it is on more and more unconventional lines. Mr. M's proof that it is a map of this or that will become correspondingly less and less on perfectly conventional lines and nearer and nearer to the proof of Mr. P.

In the many discoveries of our lives these sorts of surprise, proof and discovery are mixed in varying proportions. We are however inclined to proceed as if there were only two sorts of discovery, scientific discovery by observation and experiment and deductive discovery in strict accordance with well recognized customs of presentation. Indeed this habit of ours has found expression in the declaration that a statement has meaning only in so far as it can be verified either by observation or by calculation—otherwise it's an expression of our feelings, poetry, that sort of thing, not really a statement, not something which reveals the truth and about which reasons for and against can be given.

This habit of thought can have bad consequences. To begin with it has in fact led people to say that metaphysics is meaningless, that the paradoxes and counter-paradoxes of metaphysics are not really statements and that metaphysical reasoning is a muddled pretence at reasoning. And it has much wider and more serious consequences than this. For it leads not merely to the denigration of metaphysical reflective thought but to the denigration of all philosophical reflective thought, all reflective thought not within the bounds of ordinary convention. This comes about as follows. A person makes an unconventional statement, a paradoxical statement, only when however much reason there is *for* saying what he does there is also reason however superficial *against* saying what he does—otherwise his statement is not unconventional but conventional, not a paradox but a platitude.

But now if nothing is a paradox unless there remain reasons against saying it *and* every statement that is really a statement is either one to be verified by observation or one to be verified by calculation then no paradoxical statement is really a statement and no reasons for it really reasons. For then the position in this: When a statement is not completely verified and still has in it an element of prophecy and thus lends itself to verification by observation then we may have at the same time reasons for it and reasons against it—for example, before we have operated or taken an X-ray picture there may be reasons for thinking that a patient has a duodenal ulcer and also for thinking that he has not. But if a statement can be verified by calculation from facts already known, then either the reasons for it or the reasons against it are complete, quite conclusive. For example, if the average age of the children in this form can be calculated from facts already known then it cannot be that there is at the same time reason for saying of a statement about that average age that it is true and also reason for saying that it is false. Hence statements which are not to be verified by observations and yet are not such that either there are only reasons for them or only reasons against them cannot really be statements, and reasons for and against them cannot really be reasons.

And this is not merely a piece of general and academic reasoning. It is the general and explicit formulation of a widespread habit of thought covertly at work in instance after instance. Imagine that a man and his wife are returning from an introductory lecture on psycho-analysis. They walk awhile in silence. Suddenly the husband says 'What stuff—and to call that science'. Wife 'I thought he rather proved his points.' 'Rather proved,' says the husband 'I have heard of mathematical demonstration and I have heard of scientific evidence. But I haven't heard of "*rather* proving" things.' The wife is silenced, we may imagine. But should she

be? Not at all. For isn't what she means by 'rather proving' a thing exactly what proving a paradox is.

Usually when we make a statement is involves an element of prophecy. To give evidence for such a statement is to mention facts which give ground for expecting other facts which if they come along more and more completely prove the statement. For example, noticing certain symptoms the doctor says 'Duodenal ulcer', and the future course of the disease, perhaps also an examination of the body, confirms the diagnosis or does not. Occasionally however as we have noticed we make a statement which doesn't pretend to do more than sum up facts already known. For example when the disease has run its course the doctor may say 'There you are, it was duodenal ulcer'. In such a case the element of prophecy which was present in his diagnosis and is present in most statements has vanished, so the character of his statement has changed and the character of its proof. For the proof is now complete—it's a demonstration. We are apt to proceed as if these two types of statement and of proof are the only ones. But in doing so we distort those statements and their proofs which do not conform to these types. And there are such statements.

First, as we have noticed, there are cases in the courts in which all the relevant facts are known and yet the proof is not a demonstration and is in this way not complete. We tend to think of this incompleteness as like the incompleteness of the proof of a diagnosis which is still a prophecy. When we cannot arrive at an answer which is the right answer we tend to think that we are ignorant as to whether something hidden is or is not present. It was to combat this that Mr. Glanville Williams said 'There is nothing we are ignorant of in these cases. They are questions of words.'

It is like this also with paradoxical, unconventional, descriptions of what is known. Because they are unconventional convention does not link the words of the description fast to the facts. In this sense the proof of them must be incomplete. But this doesn't mean that the proof of them is incomplete like the proof of a prediction. In other words the way in which the proof of *these* statements is different from conventional demonstration does not make these statements precarious, dubious, uncertain.

The idea that the justification of a statement must be either of the *inductive* sort we have when we notice familiar symptoms and reckon, for example, that a patient is suffering from a certain disorder, or of the *deductive* sort we have when we have carried investigation so far that it would be senseless to deny that he is suffering from that disorder, has played a double part in metaphysics. It has encouraged and distorted its growth

and also nearly brought about its premature death by hoisting it by its own inadequate petard. For in the first place metaphysicians have said that we have no real reasons for what we claim to know about right and wrong, the minds of others, and even the material world, because they have noticed that if we trace back the reasons a person has for the statements he makes about right and wrong, etc., until we reach what finally gives him a right to make these statements then the connection between these 'ultimate reasons' and the statements they are supposed to support is *never* deductive and therefore also never inductive. They have concluded that we haven't really any reasons at all for these statements.

At the same time it has always remained paradoxical to say that we never have any reason for saying one thing rather than another about what is right and wrong, what is going on in the mind of another and so on. These sceptical conclusions have never been deduced from familiar facts by a deduction as unquestionable, as impeccable, as a mathematical demonstration. They are clearly not conclusions which future investigation will verify or refute. And consequently meta-metaphysicians have concluded that we can never have reasons for metaphysical conclusions, that the paradoxes of metaphysics aren't really statements at all but merely manifestations of muddle.

They have pretended that their own meta-metaphysical conclusion is an exception and have pretended, like other metaphysicians, that their conclusion can be deduced in steps which no one who is really intelligent and really honest will question.

But the fact is that just as their second order paradox that there is no reason for saying one thing rather than another in metaphysics is not merely an expression of muddle but also an expression of a new grasp of the peculiarities of the justification of metaphysical statements, so also the first order paradoxes of other metaphysicians are not merely expressions of muddle, but also expressions of a new grasp of the peculiarities of the justification procedure proper to statements about right and wrong, the minds of others, etc. We have seen this in outline in the case of the paradox that no one really knows what is in the mind of another. And with time and care we could do the same for the others.

The evil effect of the cramping idea that every surprising, revealing, statement must be justified either by giving information which the person surprised lacks or by taking him through a process of strict deduction which he has been incapable of carrying out is not so easily detected in our judgment of what psycho-analysts say. This is because *part* of the justification for the things psycho-analysts say which surprise us *does* lie in information which most of us have not possessed. A metaphysician

never tells us anything we haven't heard before. But psycho-analysts do. As Freud says 'Errors and dreams are phenomena which were familiar to you . . . The manifestations of neurosis, however, are an unknown region to you'. And though Freud works very much by recalling and connecting things familiar to us he also tells us astonishing stories. For example he tells us of an experiment carried out by Bernheim. 'A man was placed in a condition of somnambulism, and then made to go through all sorts of hallucinatory experiences. On being awakened he seemed at first to know nothing at all of what had taken place during his hypnotic sleep. Bernheim then asked him in so many words to tell him what had happened while he was under hypnosis. The man declared that he could not remember anything. Bernheim however insisted upon it, pressed him and assured him that he did know and that he must remember, and lo and behold! the man wavered, began to reflect, and remembered in a shadowy fashion first one of the occurrences which had been suggested to him, then something else, his recollection growing increasingly clear and complete until finally it was brought to light without a single gap'.<sup>1</sup>

Then there is Moreton Prince's story of the girl who while with her mouth she denied any memories connected with towers and the ringing of bells wrote with her hand an account of an experience which linked them with the grief and dread she had felt long ago when her mother was dangerously ill. In these cases it is new facts which make us say 'Really all that had happened was still in his mind though at first he couldn't find it'. 'Really she remembered although she seemed not to do so'. 'In the depths, in the unconscious was grief though on the surface there was only a ridiculous fear'. So does it come about that new facts give us a new apprehension of old ones and a new apprehension of old facts new freedom in looking for new ones. The metaphysician doesn't even remind us of things we had forgotten. The psycho-analyst may. All this is well known and well recognized. Indeed the idea that the psycho-analyst holds minds in a fire which makes stand out what is written there in invisible ink has only too powerful a hold upon us. What is not well recognized is how much the psycho-analyst reveals things to us in the way Mr. P, the philosopher, revealed to Mr. A what he had before his eyes without realizing it. Mr. P in order to reveal what he did to Mr. A modified and sophisticated Mr. A's conception of a map. Doctors narrow and widen the use of old names for disorder in order to present better their connections and disconnections, partly because of new discoveries but partly also because of an increased grasp of the welter of detail with which they are dealing. Psycho-analysts in

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<sup>1</sup> *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p. 85.



order to reveal to us things about ourselves modify and sophisticate our conceptions of love, hate, jealousy, envy, sympathy, sense of responsibility. They use familiar words not with a disregard of established usage but not in bondage to it.

Such procedure is always open to misunderstanding. Because of the element of diagnosis, prognosis, prediction, in psycho-analytic interpretations and generalizations it is not inappropriate to look for support for them in the way of new facts from investigation. But in so far as there is an unconventional element in the use of the words in which these interpretations are expressed no investigation will provide a proof of them on utterly conventional lines. The consequence is that people half feel that astonishing as is the new material psycho-analysts bring forward and impressive as is their re-assembling of old material they still never 'quite prove' what they say.

They are right in a sense. The psycho-analysts' statements in so far as they are not expressed in strict accord with convention will never be proved in strict accord with convention. But this does not make them like statements which could be proved and are not. The psycho-analysts' statements will not be proved because they could not be. In so far as psycho-analysts' statements are conventionally expressed and precarious because they predict they may be in fact unproved but they are not incapable of proof. On the contrary in so far as they are conventionally expressed they are as capable of proof or disproof as any other prognosis, prophecy, prediction. It is only in so far as they are unconventionally expressed that they are incapable of conventional proof or disproof. But this doesn't leave them dubious, precarious, uncertain, or insusceptible of rational procedure. It means only that in so far as they are paradoxes they are paradoxical.

All this doesn't prove that psycho-analysts do prove what they say. Whether or no they do prove what they say in the manner appropriate to it is to be settled by considering with them what they draw attention to in justification of it—only this considering need not be a matter of coming upon something we have never come upon nor a matter of assembling what we have already come upon into a perfectly *conventional* proof.

#### IV

Last time we reflected upon the peculiar character of the proof of paradox and upon how an unconscious tendency to avoid recognizing this dangerous type of thought may make us miss what it can give us, and of how in particular this tendency can distort an understanding of the paradoxes of metaphysics and psycho-analysis.

And now someone may protest saying 'But surely no one does reject

what psycho-analysts say merely because they do not always use words quite literally. Surely we all recognize an elasticity in the use of words or in your grand phrase "understand the logic of paradox", and surely we are prepared to apply this understanding'.

I answer 'Certainly we all recognize in some degree that language may be used paradoxically. And I do not claim that anyone rejects psycho-analytic claims merely because he does not recognize the power of paradox to reveal the truth or does not recognize it when considering what psycho-analysts say. But I do claim that in general we do not adequately recognize how often and how usefully people speak paradoxically, and I do claim that in particular our failure to recognize this adequately may contribute towards a person's rejecting psycho-analytic theories and psycho-analytic interpretations. I do claim that a person may use the paradoxical character of psycho-analytic statements in order to continue to reject them whatever evidence is assembled in support of them, and also in order to evade them by giving them a bogus acceptance'.

As to this bogus acceptance. It is not confined to psycho-analytic paradoxes. When someone says something astonishing, for example, 'St. Augustine wasn't a saint,' 'We're all mad really', 'Really we know nothing of the minds of others', 'Chairs and tables aren't really solid' we may at first expect him to produce in support of his statements facts unknown to the rest of us. When it turns out that he is not relying on facts not commonly known or only partly relying on these while it is also clear that no familiar facts could be conventionally described by his words, we may say, 'Ah I see you are using words in a special way of your own'; and when we say this we may no longer resist what is said and at the same time cease to pay much attention to it.

For example, when some metaphysical philosophers said 'Metaphysical questions are meaningless' some people took this paradox literally and opposed it vigorously. But others said 'Ah I see you are using the word "meaningful" in an extraordinary way of your own. If you mean by "a meaningful question" one that is either scientific or mathematical then of course metaphysical questions aren't meaningful.' And saying this they missed the point of the paradox. They aimed to castrate it, and did—as far as they were concerned. In the same way when Freud said of things which would not ordinarily have been called sexual that they are, some people opposed this but others cried 'Peace, peace' when there was no peace. For they said 'No doubt he is using "sexual" in a special sense of his own'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Lecture XX 'The Sexual Life of Man'.

The consequence is that though it is true it is extremely dangerous to say that philosophers and psycho-analysts are not speaking literally. It is even dangerous to say that their paradoxes are paradoxes. For only in the shock of taking a paradox literally will people give that attention to concrete detail which will enable them to break old habits of grouping and recognize not merely *that* an old classification blinds and distorts but *how* it does.

Even when the logical character of paradoxical statements is fairly recognized and it is realized that in dealing with them critical attention must not become unsympathetic *nor* sympathetic attention uncritical, the metaphysical philosopher and the psycho-analytic philosopher still have big difficulties to meet.

In the first place the material they have to deal with is subtle patterns in time which are hard to grasp. The characters of question are a matter of the parts they play in discussions—not only in actual discussions but in discussions which might have been carried on. The characters of persons are a matter of the parts they play in life—not only the parts they actually play but the parts they might have played had things been different. Lives and discussions are patterns in time and cannot be covered by the eye at a glance. Consequently without recalling innumerable incidents, without selecting significant items and assembling them like a dramatist, one cannot grasp these patterns.

In order to grasp complex and unmanageable patterns we are always using models, others patterns which we have grasped. With every name we apply we compare one thing with another, with many others. For example, we do this when we speak of a *current* of electricity. But of course we don't always set out explicitly those things with which we compare the complex reality we now have to grasp. The comparisons we make are at once valuable and dangerous. Without them we cannot bring order into bewildering flux but with them we may in the interests of unity blind ourselves to the diversity of the individual.

The metaphysician brings into the light certain old-established and invaluable models which we use in order to grasp the characters of sorts of questions, statements, proofs. He does this not because he plans to discard these models as merely misleading but so that we may control them instead of their controlling us, so that we may see how they illuminate and how they distort. We saw how the model of a hidden stream has defects as a model for consciousness. It leaves us wondering when and where the stream pushes the bodily machinery and how we ever came to know of the presence of this stream. But we saw too how the model of electricity or energy also has defects. It obscures the fact that it makes sense to talk of a person answering questions about how he feels according

to how he feels in a way in which it makes no sense to talk of another person, B, answering questions about how A feels according to how he, B, feels. The old model whatever its defects does not obscure this. It misrepresents the peculiar right a person has to make statements about what is in his mind, for it represents it as like that of a man who tells of the contents of a room to which he alone has the key. But at least it does not ignore this peculiar right. Nor does it ignore the fact that a person can know the sensations and feelings of another only in so far as he himself has had sensations and feelings of a like sort—a man, a god, who had never felt pain could not know that another was in pain, only that he groaned. No wonder we resist the attempt to substitute for a model which recognizes these things one which does not. The old one has served us well and will continue to do so; nor need we fear it once it no longer so fascinates us that we cannot recognize the differences between the model and that to which we apply it. But the fact remains that while this model has a monopoly in our minds it does on occasion lead us no end of a dance.

The psycho-analyst also tries to bring into the light models which dominate our thought, our talk, our feelings, our actions, in short our lives. And of course it is not the professional psycho-analyst only who does this—anyone who reflects upon people and tries to come at the truth does in some degree the same thing. Recently M. Blum broadcast some reflections on marriage and he then said again what we know has often been said, namely, that a woman in love tends to see her lover not as himself but as a prince charming. We might add, what also has often been said, that a man in love tends to see the woman with whom he is in love as a princess, a queen, an angel, a goddess. And we might add, what has less often been said, that a lover tends to see the person loved not only as a being with more than human, with divine, power, understanding, generosity, charm and unchanging love, but also as a being with demonic, Circe-like, wolf-like power, ruthlessness, and deceitfulness. We might say of someone 'He sees Eve—you remember Eve Brown?—well believe it or believe it not, he sees her as a mysterious, not to say curious, combination of the Madonna of the Rocks and the Venus of the Venusberg.' Or again we might say 'Deep down he sees every woman as a Cressida.'

When we try to bring out how someone sees something, say a goose, by saying that he sees it as something else, for example a swan, we may be concerned only to give an illuminating, co-ordinating, description of how he sees it but we may also be concerned to give at the same time an explanation of why he sees it as he does. For example it is sometimes said of someone 'He regards so and so as God Almighty', and this might be said even when the person in question had never heard of God. In

that case however although what we say might be an illuminating description of him it would give no explanation of why he regarded so and so with such reverence. On the other hand if the person of whom we speak had heard of God and believed in Him and then perhaps lost that belief we might say 'He sees so and so as God Almighty' and with these words give not merely a description but part of the explanation of his attitude to so and so. The psycho-analyst tries to describe the present in terms which do not merely connect the present with the present but also connect the present with the past. For example, suppose we say 'Jack regards every woman as a Cressida'. This won't satisfy the psycho-analyst. What we have said is well enough as a description. But it explains nothing. *Why* does Jack regard every woman as a Cressida? He was never himself deceived by Cressida. Nor by anyone like her. But is this last true? For hasn't he known a woman who gave him all the love and all the good in all the world he knew and then too often suddenly withdrew it and gave that love and good to another? He has—in his mother's arms. No wonder that even when the lips of Venus are those of the Madonna they still smile like the Mona Lisa.

The psycho-analyst seeks to bring into the light those models from the past which for good and evil so powerfully influence our lives in the present, so powerfully distort reality and so powerfully illuminate it. For, of course, these models don't only distort. By no means. No doubt the lover sees what we see isn't there. But doesn't he also see what we can't see? Unquestionably Miss E. Brown is not Aphrodite nor Diana. But then may be she isn't the Miss Brown we think we know. Hate may blind, but hate, even neurotic hate, also reveals. The subtle evidence assembled to prove suspicions of Albertine may not prove precisely those suspicions but they don't prove nothing.<sup>1</sup>

The phantasies and models, illuminating but distorting, which metaphysical philosophers and psycho-analysts try to bring to light are unconscious. This makes the work of bringing them to light difficult in a way intimately bound up with a difficulty we have already looked at, the difficulty which lies in the proof of statements in which the ordinary usage of words is followed and yet left behind, in which words are used so that we cannot say that they are not being used in their old sense nor yet that they are. Asked of such statements as these whether they are true or false we are obliged to say 'Well they are and they aren't'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Consider also William Sansom's *The Body*.

<sup>2</sup> It is sometimes said that the unconscious knows nothing of logic and even that it is not bound by logic. But this is a mystery-making way of talking. The unconscious knows as much as any one else about logic. And the laws of logic can no more break down in the world of the unconscious than they can in any other world. What is true is that in any sphere whatever to connect our statements in accordance with the laws of logic

And those situations in which we say of someone that he unconsciously thinks this, imagines that, unconsciously wishes this, feels that, are always ones in which when asked whether he thinks this, imagines that, wishes this, feels that, we are inclined to say 'Well he does and he doesn't'. No wonder the logic of paradox is important to the understanding of statements of the sort 'Unconsciously he. . . .'

Take now the statement 'Unconsciously we think of the soul as a hidden stream, as a little bird within'. Someone may protest 'What nonsense. Primitive people may have had this idea but we are aware that consciousness or the mind or the soul is not a material thing at all, however transparent or elusive'.

It is true that we do not watch for the soul leaving the body in sleep or at death or cut open skulls extremely quickly in order to catch a glimpse of the soul. Further, for ascertaining the truth about birds and clouds we count Jack as good as his neighbour while for ascertaining the truth about a soul we count Jack better, if the soul is his.

Nevertheless it is also true that we seldom consciously and in so many words recognize the difference between souls and minds on the one hand and on the other hand ghosts, winds, clouds and streams. And even people who pay lip service to this difference may not recognize the difference between this difference and the difference between stone, ice and water. We sometimes ask 'How when and where does the soul act upon the body?' We sometimes say 'The most careful physiologist cannot find thoughts or feelings, the mind or the soul' and say it either with ill-concealed satisfaction at there being still something which eludes the scientist or with an equally inappropriate innuendo that to believe in mind or the soul is unscientific. In these ways we betray the feebleness of our grasp of the idiosyncrasy of the logic of the soul, that is of the way questions about the soul are settled. We betray this again when we are perplexed by a sceptical person who suddenly, by reasoning which every feature of our language seems to condone, forces us towards a

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serves us well only in so far as the language in which we make those statements is applicable to the phenomena with which we are dealing without distorting those phenomena in those respects with which we are concerned. There are no doubt some cows which are more like horses than others but upon the whole the animals which we actually come across fall very definitely under one or other of the animal names in our vocabulary and the law 'If it's a cow it can't be a horse' serves us well. But if Nature were to begin to produce beasts as much like cows as horses, as much like dogs as cats, our language would begin to break down again and the law 'If it's a cow it can't be a horse' though it would not become false would become as much a menace as a help.

Now in describing people, though our language serves us well enough up to a point, we are often concerned with likenesses and differences which it not only fails to reveal but in so far as we rely upon it conceals. Consequently for any minute understanding of people's spiritual states laws such as 'If he loves he doesn't hate', 'He can't think this and also not think it' become as much a menace as a help.

formula of doubt which seems to express the metaphysical confirmation of our worst fears. We are at once dominated by the model of the stream, the bird, the manikin, the ghost and yet unconscious of it.

Someone may protest 'I see that while there are features of our thought about the soul which are in favour of saying that we are not dominated by the model of the bird and the stream, there are also features of it which are in favour of saying that we are. But why say that we are unconscious of this model? We talk openly enough of the stream of consciousness.'

It is true that we talk openly of the stream of consciousness, of the stream of thoughts and feelings, and even of the mysterious inhabitant that in sleep may leave the body and visit again places it used to know. But if a metaphysician says 'The soul you know is not a bird nor a stream nor even a wind' then we are apt to reply 'Well of course. We know the soul isn't a bird or a stream or a wind. Primitive people may have thought so but we are aware that the soul is not a material thing at all however elusive or transparent'. And with these words we may, while admitting that the myth of the bird lingers in our language and even in a sense in our thought, avoid recognizing its power, its power to lead us a purely metaphysical dance and even to bewilder us in factual inquiries by mixing with the difficulties of getting the facts a feeling of mystery which comes from metaphysical misunderstanding. For example when the question is asked 'Do animals, do dogs, think?' the inquiry is sometimes bedevilled by mixing with the difficulty of finding out what dogs are capable of, a difficulty which is expressed by saying 'We can only find out how dogs *behave*. We can't know anything about their minds or indeed whether they have any'. This last doubt is nothing but a special case of 'No one can know anything about the mind of another, only about how he behaves'. Again, Mr. Bernal in a discussion about science and ethics which was carried on in *Nature* accuses Mr. Waddington of believing in dubious and elusive entities such as the super-ego. And this accusation though it arises only in part from metaphysical misunderstanding of the logic of mental events does arise in part from this and in part from another metaphysical misunderstanding which comes from thinking of the mind, the soul, the super-ego, as something not only behind bodily events but also behind mental events. And people are suspicious of the unconscious and of unconscious mental events not only because they misunderstand the logic of paradox but also because they think of unconscious mental events as behind, below, deeper down than, the conscious ones as there are deeper and deeper depths in a stream. The two misunderstandings encourage each other. We are at once dominated by the model of the stream and the ghost, and yet unconscious of its power.

It is the same with the models the power of which the psycho-

analyst tries to bring home to us. He says perhaps 'In your feelings your parents are inside you, watching every act you do, cognizant of every thought you think, and consequently hurt, pleased, angered not only by what you do but also by what you think of doing', or 'Unconsciously you think your parents are inside you'. We say perhaps 'What nonsense' or 'If you mean that I hear from time to time what used to be called the voice of conscience why don't you say so instead of talking in this ridiculous new way'.

Just as the metaphysician must assemble evidences in support of his claim that we not only speak as if the the soul were a hidden manikin but from time to time think and feel as if this were so the psycho-analyst must wait until the person to whom he speaks provides the evidences which show how inadequate is the expression 'You hear from time to time the voice of conscience' to cover the facts he refers to by the words 'You have always the idea that your parents are within you'.

In thinking of the metaphysician and the psycho-analyst as trying to bring to light unconscious models we come again upon what I have called bogus acceptance but now of a rather different sort. For example, the metaphysician says perhaps 'You have the idea that language is an exact calculus'. Someone may reply 'I know, I know. Words are vague and we don't sufficiently recognize this'. What is one to say then? And yet the person who says this may have an utterly inadequate idea of how insufficiently we recognize the vagueness of language.<sup>1</sup> A moment later he may be found treating a question which because of the vagueness of language has no definite answer as if it had one, or insisting that it is a different question, one which has a definite answer, or insisting because it hasn't a definite answer that it isn't a question.

In a like way someone may say to a psycho-analyst 'Yes I know it has been discovered that many men secretly envy women their role in life' or even 'I know I secretly envy women their role in life' while having the feeblest apprehension of the concrete detail which backs these statements. The envy itself makes it the harder to accept the humiliation of recognizing it. A man may say 'All right, all right, I know that old stuff about seeing the woman I am in love with as my mother' and still not be alive to the ramifications of the power of that model from the past which illuminates and distorts the present.

Besides all these ways in which the procedure, the difficulties, and the aims, of psycho-analysis are reflected in metaphysics there is another connection, so I believe, which brings them closer still. As I have said I believe that metaphysics arises from applying, in a peculiarly profound

<sup>1</sup> Compare Karin Horney in *New Ways in Psycho-Analysis* on the meaning of the word 'unconscious'.



study of what gives us the right to make statements of this type or that, models which are inappropriate. In particular the deductive model is appropriate only in a non-profound study of what gives one a right to make this or that statement of a given type. While we are concerned only with what gives a person a right to make a *particular* statement of a certain type—ethical, mathematical, physical, psychological—and are prepared to admit as giving him a right to make that statement other statements of *the same type* the inductive-deductive models described in books on logic are adequate. But sometimes we are concerned to push further the inquiry as to what gives him a right to make the statement he does. Then when he submits premisses which consist of statements of the same type we ask him what right he has to accept those premisses. At once the inductive-deductive models are no longer adequate. For only statements of the same type are connected on the inductive-deductive models. Consequently if we are dissatisfied with premisses which are of the same type as a certain statement and yet insist that only what is connected with a statement inductively or deductively gives a right to make that statement we are bound to conclude that in the end no one really has any right to make that statement or any other of the type in question. There is therefore logical confusion and logical penetration at the back of metaphysics.

But if we now ask 'What drives people to pursue to such lengths questions of the sort' 'Do we know this?' 'What right have we to make these statements?' and what preserves the power of those models which keep us for ever seeking but never finding the knowledge we seem to want, then it occurs to us to wonder whether the forces at work in this curiously unsatisfactory struggle which never ends in success nor in failure aren't in part the same as those at work in those other struggles in which something is for ever sought and never found, struggles which in their turn are connected with an earlier time when there was something, namely the world of the grown-ups, knowledge of which we desperately desired and equally desperately dreaded.

When we consider the obstinate doubts of the metaphysician 'Can one ever know what's right or wrong?' 'Can one ever know what others think or feel?' they readily remind us of the chronic doubts of the neurotic and the psychotic 'Have I committed the unpardonable sin?' 'Aren't they all against me really?' On the road to Solipsism—which is the doctrine not that I matter to nobody but the that nobody exists but me—on the road to Solipsism there blows the same wind of loneliness which blows on the road to the house with walls of glass which none can break. In the labyrinth of metaphysics are the same whispers as one hears when climbing Kafka's staircases to the tribunal which is always one

floor further up. Is it perhaps because of this that when in metaphysics we seem to have arranged by a new technique a new dawn then we find ourselves again on Chirico's sad terraces, where those whom we can never know still sit and it is neither night nor day?

We may hurry away and drown the cries that follow from those silent places—drown them in endless talk, drown them in the whine of the saxophone or the roar from the stands. Or, more effective, we may quiet those phantasmal voices by doing something for people real and alive. But if we can't we must return, force the accusers to speak up, and insist on recognizing the featureless faces. We can hardly do this by ourselves. But there are those who will go with us and, however terrifying the way, not desert us.

## Description and Evaluation\*

### 7.1

OF ALL the problems raised by the preceding argument, the key problem is as follows: there are two sorts of things that we can say, for example, about strawberries; the first sort is usually called *descriptive*, the second sort *evaluative*. Examples of the first sort of remark are, 'This strawberry is sweet' and 'This strawberry is large, red, and juicy'. Examples of the second sort of remark are 'This is a good strawberry' and 'This strawberry is just as strawberries ought to be'. The first sort of remark is often given as a reason for making the second sort of remark; but the first sort does not by itself entail the second sort, nor vice versa. Yet there seems to be some close logical connexion between them. Our problem is: 'What is this connexion?'; for no light is shed by saying that there is a connexion, unless we can say what it is.

The problem may also be put in this way: if we knew all the descriptive properties which a particular strawberry had (knew, of every descriptive sentence relating to the strawberry, whether it was true or false), and if we knew also the meaning of the word 'good', then what else should we require to know, in order to be able to tell whether a strawberry was a good one? Once the question is put in this way, the answer should be apparent. We should require to know, what are the criteria in virtue of which a strawberry is to be called a good one, or what are the characteristics that make a strawberry a good one, or what is the standard of goodness in strawberries. We should require to be given the major premiss. We have already seen that we can know the meaning of 'good strawberry' without knowing any of these latter things—though there is also a sense

\* From *The Language of Morals*, by R. M. Hare, Chapter 7, pp. 111-126. The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1960-61. Reprinted by permission. References to other sections of the book remain in this text.

of the sentence 'What does it mean to call a strawberry a good one?' in which we should not know the answer to it, unless we also knew the answer to these other questions. It is now time to elucidate and distinguish these two ways in which we can be said to know what it means to call an object a good member of its class. This will help us to see more clearly both the differences and the similarities between 'good' and words like 'red' and 'sweet'.

Since we have been dwelling for some time on the differences, it will do no harm now to mention some of the similarities. For this purpose, let us consider the two sentences 'M is a red motor-car' and 'M is a good motor-car'. It will be noticed that 'motor-car', unlike 'strawberry', is a functional word, as defined in the preceding chapter. Reference to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* shows that a motor-car is a carriage, and a carriage a means of conveyance. Thus, if a motor-car will not convey anything, we know from the definition of motor-car that it is not a good one. But when we know this, we know so little, compared with what is required in order to know the full criteria of a good motor-car, that I propose in what follows to ignore, for the sake of simplicity, this complicating factor. I shall treat 'motor-car' as if it did not have to be defined functionally: that is to say, I shall assume that we could learn the meaning of 'motor-car' (as in a sense we can) simply by being shown examples of motor-cars. It is, of course, not always easy to say whether or not a word is a functional word; it depends, like all questions of meaning, on how the word is taken by a particular speaker.

The first similarity between 'M is a red motor-car' and 'M is a good motor-car' is that both can be, and often are, used for conveying information of a purely factual or descriptive character. If I say to someone 'M is a good motor-car', and he himself has not seen, and knows nothing of M, but does on the other hand know what sorts of motor-car we are accustomed to call 'good' (knows what is the accepted standard of goodness in motor-cars), he undoubtedly receives information from my remark about what sort of motor-car it is. He will complain that I have misled him, if he subsequently discovers that M will not go over 30 m.p.h., or uses as much oil as petrol, or is covered with rust, or has large holes in the roof. His reason for complaining will be the same as it would have been if I had said that the car was red and he subsequently discovered that it was black. I should have led him to expect the motor-car to be of a certain description when in fact it was of a quite different description.

The second similarity between the two sentences is this. Sometimes we use them, not for actually conveying information, but for putting our hearer into a position subsequently to use the word 'good' or 'red' for

giving or getting information. Suppose, for example, that he is utterly unfamiliar with motor-cars in the same sort of way as most of us are unfamiliar with horses nowadays, and knows no more about motor-cars than is necessary in order to distinguish a motor-car from a hansom cab. In that case, my saying to him 'M is a good motor-car' will not give him any information about M, beyond the information that it is a motor-car. But if he is able then or subsequently to examine M, he will have learnt something. He will have learnt that some of the characteristics which M has, are characteristics which make people—or at any rate me—call it a good motor-car. This may not be to learn very much. But suppose that I make judgments of this sort about a great many motor-cars, calling some good and some not good, and he is able to examine all or most of the motor-cars about which I am speaking; he will in the end learn quite a lot, always presuming that I observe a consistent standard in calling them good or not good. He will eventually, if he pays careful attention, get into the position in which he knows, after I have said that a motor-car is a good one, what sort of a motor-car he may expect it to be—for example fast, stable on the road, and so on.

Now if we were dealing, not with 'good', but with 'red', we should call this process 'explaining the meaning of the word'—and we might indeed, in a sense, say that what I have been doing is explaining what one means by 'a good motor-car'. This is a sense of 'mean' about which, as we have seen, we must be on our guard. The processes, however, are very similar. I might explain the meaning of 'red' by continually saying of various motor-cars 'M is a red motor-car', 'N is not a red motor-car', and so on. If he were attentive enough, he would soon get into a position in which he was able to use the word 'red' for giving or getting information, at any rate about motor-cars. And so, both with 'good' and with 'red', there is this process, which in the case of 'red' we may call 'explaining the meaning', but in the case of 'good' may only call it so loosely and in a secondary sense; to be clear we must call it something like 'explaining or conveying or setting forth the standard of goodness in motor-cars'.

The standard of goodness, like the meaning of 'red', is normally something which is public and commonly accepted. When I explain to someone the meaning of 'red motor-car', he expects, unless I am known to be very eccentric, that he will find other people using it in the same way. And similarly, at any rate with objects like motor-cars where there is a commonly accepted standard, he will expect, having learnt from me what is the standard of goodness in motor-cars, to be able, by using the expression 'good motor-car', to give information to other people, and get it from them, without confusion.

A third respect in which 'good motor-car' resembles 'red motor-car' is the following: both 'good' and 'red' can vary as regards the exactitude or vagueness of the information which they do or can convey. We normally use the expression 'red motor-car' very loosely. Any motor-car that lies somewhere between the unmistakably purple and the unmistakably orange could without abuse of language be called a red motor-car. And similarly, the standard for calling motor-cars good is commonly very loose. There are certain characteristics, such as inability to exceed 30 m.p.h., which to anyone but an eccentric would be sufficient conditions for refusing to call it a good motor-car; but there is no precise set of accepted criteria such that we can say 'If a motor-car satisfies these conditions, it is a good one; if not, not'. And in both cases we could be precise if we wanted to. We could, for certain purposes, agree not to say that a motor-car was 'really red' unless the redness of its paint reached a certain measurable degree of purity and saturation; and similarly, we might adopt a very exact standard of goodness in motor-cars. We might refuse the name 'good motor-car' to any car that would not go round a certain race-track without mishap in a certain limited time, that did not conform to certain other rigid specifications as regards accommodation, &c. This sort of thing has not been done for the expression 'good motor-car'; but, as Mr. Urmson has pointed out, it has been done by the Ministry of Agriculture for the expression 'super apple'.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to notice that the exactness or looseness of their criteria does absolutely nothing to distinguish words like 'good' from words like 'red'. Words in both classes may be descriptively loose or exact, according to how rigidly the criteria have been laid down by custom or convention. It certainly is not true that value-words are distinguished from descriptive words in that the former are looser, descriptively, than the latter. There are loose and rigid examples of both sorts of word. Words like 'red' can be extremely loose, without becoming to the least degree evaluative; and expressions like 'good sewage effluent' can be the subject of very rigid criteria, without in the least ceasing to be evaluative.

It is important to notice also, how easy it is, in view of these resemblances between 'good' and 'red', to think that there are no differences—to think that to set forth the standard of goodness in motor-cars is to set forth the meaning, in all senses that there are of that word, of the expression 'good motor-car'; to think that 'M is a good motor-car' means neither more nor less than 'M has certain characteristics of which "good" is the name'.

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, lix (1950), 152 (also in *Logic and Language*, ii, ed. Flew, 166).

## 7.2

It is worth noticing here that the functions of the word 'good' which are concerned with information could be performed equally well if 'good' had no commendatory function at all. This can be made clear by substituting another word, made up for the purpose, which is to be supposed to lack the commendatory force of 'good'. Let us use 'doog' as this new word. 'Doog', like 'good', can be used for conveying information only if the criteria for its application are known; but this makes it, unlike 'good', altogether meaningless until these criteria are made known. I make the criteria known by pointing out various motor-cars, and saying 'M is a doog motor-car', 'N is not a doog-motor-car', and so on. We must imagine that, although 'doog' has no commendatory force, the criteria for doogness in motor-cars which I am employing are the same as those which, in the previous example, I employed for goodness in motor-cars. And so, as in the previous example, the learner, if he is sufficiently attentive, becomes able to use the word 'doog' for giving or getting information; when I say to him 'Z is a doog motor-car', he knows what characteristics to expect it to have; and if he wants to convey to someone else that a motor-car Y has those same characteristics, he can do so by saying 'Y is a doog motor-car'.

Thus the word 'doog' does (though only in connexion with motor-cars) half the jobs that the word 'good' does—namely, all those jobs that are concerned with the giving, or learning to give or get, information. It does not do those jobs which are concerned with commendation. Thus we might say that 'doog' functions just like a descriptive word. First my learner learns to use it by my giving him examples of its application, and then he uses it by applying it to fresh examples. It would be quite natural to say that what I was doing was teaching my learner the *meaning* of 'doog'; and this shows us again how natural it is to say that, when we are learning a similar lesson for the expression 'good motor-car' (i.e. learning the criteria of its application), we are learning its meaning. But with the word 'good' it is misleading to say this; for the meaning of 'good motor-car' (in another sense of 'meaning') is something that might be known by someone who did not know the criteria of its application; he would know, if someone said that a motor-car was a good one, that he was commending it; and to know that, would be to know the meaning of the expression. Further, as we saw earlier (6. 4), someone might know about 'good' all the things which my learner learnt about the word 'doog' (namely, how to apply the word to the right objects, and use it for giving and getting information) and yet be said not to know its meaning; for he might not know that to call a motor-car good was to commend it.

## 7.3

It may be objected by some readers that to call the descriptive or informative job of 'good' its *meaning* in any sense is illegitimate. Such objectors might hold that the meaning of 'good' is adequately characterized by saying that it is used for commending, and that any information we get from its use is not a question of meaning at all. When I say 'M is a good motor-car', my meaning, on this view, is to commend M; if a hearer gets from my remark, together with his knowledge of the standard habitually used by me in assessing the merits of motor-cars, information about what description of motor-car it is, this is not part of my meaning; all my hearer has done is to make an inductive inference from 'Hare has usually in the past commended motor-cars of a certain description' and 'Hare has commended M' to 'M is of the same description'. I suspect that this objection is largely a verbal one, and I have no wish to take sides against it. On the one hand, we must insist that to know the criteria for applying the word 'good' to motor-cars is not to know—at any rate in the full or primary sense—the meaning of the expression 'good motor-car'; to this extent the objection must be agreed with. On the other hand, the relation of the expression 'good motor-car' to the criteria for its application is very like the relation of a descriptive expression to its defining characteristics, and this likeness finds an echo in our language when we ask 'What do you mean, good?', and get the answer 'I mean it'll do 80 and never breaks down'. In view of this undoubted fact of usage, I deem it best to adopt the term 'descriptive meaning'. Moreover, it is natural to say that a sentence has descriptive meaning, if the speaker intends it primarily to convey information; and when a newspaper says that X opened the batting on a good wicket, its intention is not primarily to commend the wicket, but to inform its readers what description of wicket it was.

## 7.4

It is time now to justify my calling the descriptive meaning of 'good' secondary to the evaluative meaning. My reasons for doing so are two. First, the evaluative meaning is constant for every class of object for which the word is used. When we call a motor-car or a chronometer or a cricket-bat or a picture good, we are commending all of them. But because we are commending all of them for different reasons, the descriptive meaning is different in all cases. We have knowledge of the evaluative meaning of 'good' from our earliest years; but we are constantly learning to use it in new descriptive meanings, as the classes of objects whose virtues we learn to distinguish grow more numerous. Sometimes we learn to use 'good' in a new descriptive meaning through being taught it by



an expert in a particular field—for example, a horseman might teach me how to recognize a good hunter. Sometimes, on the other hand, we make up a new descriptive meaning for ourselves. This happens when we start having a standard for a class of objects, certain members of which we have started needing to place in order of merit, but for which there has hitherto been no standard, as in the ‘cactus’ example (6. 2). I shall in the next chapter discuss why we commend things.

The second reason for calling the evaluative meaning primary is, that we can use the evaluative force of the word in order to *change* the descriptive meaning for any class of objects. This is what the moral reformer often does in morals; but the same process occurs outside morals. It may happen that motor-cars will in the near future change considerably in design (e.g. by our seeking economy at the expense of size). It may be that then we shall cease giving the name ‘a good motor-car’ to a car that now would rightly and with the concurrence of all be allowed that name. How, linguistically speaking, would this have happened? At present, we are roughly agreed (though only roughly) on the necessary and sufficient criteria for calling a motor-car a good one. If what I have described takes place, we may begin to say ‘No cars of the nineteen-fifties were really good; there weren’t any good ones till 1960’. Now here we cannot be using ‘good’ with the same descriptive meaning as it is now generally used with; for some of the cars of 1950 do indubitably have those characteristics which entitle them to the name ‘good motor-car’ in the 1950 descriptive sense of that word. What is happening is that the evaluative meaning of the word is being used in order to shift the descriptive meaning; we are doing what would be called, if ‘good’ were a purely descriptive word, redefining it. But we cannot call it that, for the evaluative meaning remains constant; we are rather altering the standard. This is similar to the process called by Professor Stevenson ‘persuasive definition’;<sup>1</sup> the process is not necessarily, however, highly coloured with emotion.

We may notice here that there are two chief ways in which a change in standard may be reflected in, and indeed partly effected by, a change in language. The first is the one which I have just illustrated; the evaluative meaning of ‘good’ is retained, and is used in order to alter the descriptive meaning and so establish a new standard. The second does not often occur with the word ‘good’; for that word is so well-established as a value-word that the procedure would be practically impossible. This procedure is for the word to be gradually emptied of its evaluative meaning through being used more and more in what I shall call a conventional or ‘inverted-commas’ way; when it has lost all its evaluative meaning it

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics and Language*, ch. ix.

comes to be used as a purely descriptive word for designating certain characteristics of the object, and, when it is required to commend or condemn objects in this class, some quite different value-word is imported for the purpose. The two processes may be illustrated and contrasted by a somewhat over-schematized account of what has happened in the last two centuries to the expression 'eligible bachelor'. 'Eligible' started off as a value-word, meaning 'such as should be chosen (*sc.* as a husband for one's daughters)'. Then, because the criteria of eligibility came to be fairly rigid, it acquired a descriptive meaning too; a person, if said to be eligible, might, in the eighteenth century, have been expected to have large landed estates and perhaps a title. By the nineteenth century, however, the criteria of eligibility have changed; what makes a bachelor eligible is no longer necessarily landed property or a title; it is substantial wealth of any kind provided that it is well-secured. We might imagine a nineteenth-century mother saying 'I know he is not of noble birth; but he's eligible all the same, because he has £3,000 a year in the Funds, and much more besides when his father dies'. This would be an example of the first method. On the other hand, in the twentieth century, partly as a reaction from the over-rigid standards of the nineteenth, which resulted in the word 'eligible' lapsing into a conventional use, the second method has been adopted. If now someone said 'He is an eligible bachelor', we could almost feel the inverted commas round the word, and even the irony; we should feel that if that was all that could be said for him, there must be something wrong with him. For commending bachelors, on the other hand, we now use quite different words; we say 'He is likely to make a very *good* husband for Jane', or 'She was very *sensible* to say "yes" '.

The close connexion of standards of values with language is illustrated by the plight of the truly bilingual. A writer equally at home in English and French relates that once, when walking in the park on a rainy day, he met a lady dressed in a way which the English would call sensible, but the French *ridicule*; his mental reaction to this had to be expressed bilingually, because the standards he was applying were of diverse origin; he found himself saying to himself (slipping from English into French) 'Pretty adequate armour. How uncomfortable though. Why go for a walk if you feel like this? *Elle est parfaitement ridicule.*' This cleavage of standards is said sometimes to produce neuroses in bilinguals, as might be expected in view of the close bearing of standards of values upon action.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. H. J. Lagarde-Quost, 'The Bilingual Citizen', *Britain Today*, Dec. 1947, p. 13; Jan. 1948, p. 13.

## 7.5

Although with 'good' the evaluative meaning is primary, there are other words in which the evaluative meaning is secondary to the descriptive. Such words are 'tidy' and 'industrious'. Both are normally used to commend; but we can say, without any hint of irony, 'too tidy' or 'too industrious'. It is the descriptive meaning of these words that is most firmly attached to them; and therefore, although we must for certain purposes class them as value-words (for if we treat them as purely descriptive, logical errors result), they are so in a less full sense than 'good'. If the evaluative meaning of a word, which was primary, comes to be secondary, that is a sign that the standard to which the word appeals has become conventional. It is, of course, impossible to say *exactly* when this has happened; it is a process like the coming of winter.

Although the evaluative meaning of 'good' is primary, the secondary descriptive meaning is never wholly absent. Even when we are using the word 'good' evaluatively in order to set up a new standard, the word still has a descriptive meaning, not in the sense that it is used to convey information, but in the sense that its use in setting up the new standard is an essential preliminary—like definition in the case of a purely descriptive word—to its subsequent use with a new descriptive meaning. It is also to be noticed that the relative prominence of the descriptive and evaluative meanings of 'good' varies according to the class of objects within which commendation is being given. We may illustrate this by taking two extreme examples. If I talk of 'a good egg', it is at once known to what description of egg I am referring—namely, one that is not decomposed. Here the descriptive meaning predominates, because we have very fixed standards for assessing the goodness of eggs. On the other hand, if I say that a poem is a good one, very little information is given about what description of poem it is—for there is no accepted standard of goodness in poems. But it must not be thought that 'good egg' is exclusively descriptive, or 'good poem' exclusively evaluative. If, as the Chinese are alleged to do, we chose to eat eggs that are decomposed, we should call that kind of egg good, just as, because we choose to eat game that is slightly decomposed, we call it 'well-hung' (compare also the expression 'good Stilton cheese'). And if I said that a poem was good, and was not a very eccentric person, my hearer would be justified in assuming that the poem was not 'Happy birthday to you!'

In general, the more fixed and accepted the standard, the more information is conveyed. But it must not be thought that the evaluative force of the word varies at all exactly in inverse proportion to the descriptive. The two vary independently: where a standard is firmly

established and is as firmly believed in, a judgement containing 'good' may be highly informative, without being any the less commendatory. Consider the following description of the Oxford Sewage Farm:

The method employed is primitive but efficient. The farm is unsightly, obnoxious to people dwelling near it, and not very remunerative, but the effluent from it is, in the technical sense, good.<sup>1</sup>

Now here, as may be seen by consulting handbooks on the subject, there are perfectly well-recognized tests for determining whether effluent is good or bad. One manual<sup>2</sup> gives a simple field test, and another<sup>3</sup> gives a series of more comprehensive tests which take up seventeen pages. This might tempt us to say that the word is used in a purely descriptive sense and has no evaluative force. But, although admittedly in calling effluent good in this technical sense we are commending it as effluent and not as perfume, we are nevertheless commending it; it is not a neutral chemical or biological fact about it that it is good; to say that it was bad would be to give a very good reason for sacking the sewage-farmer or taking other steps to see that it was good in future. The proper comment on such a lapse was made by a former Archbishop of York, speaking to the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute, 1912:

There is now, I hope, no need of the trenchant eloquence of that noble-hearted pioneer of sanitary science, Charles Kingsley, to insist that it is not religion, but something more nearly approaching blasphemy, to say that an outbreak of disease is God's will being done, when patently it is man's duty which is being left undone.<sup>4</sup>

It is true that, if the word 'good' in a certain sentence has very little evaluative meaning, it is likely that it has a fair amount of descriptive meaning, and vice versa. That is because, if it had very little of either, it would have very little meaning at all, and would not be worth uttering. To this extent the meanings vary inversely. But this is only a tendency; we may do justice to the logical phenomena by saying that 'good' normally has at least some of both sorts of meaning; that it normally has sufficient of both sorts taken together to make it worth uttering; and that, provided that the first two conditions are satisfied, the amounts of the two sorts of meaning vary independently.

There are, however, cases in which we use the word 'good' with no commendatory meaning at all. We must distinguish several kinds of such non-commendatory uses. The first has been called the *inverted-commas*

<sup>1</sup> *Social Services in the Oxford District*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Kershaw, *Sewage Purification and Disposal*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>3</sup> Thresh, Beale, and Suckling, *The Examination of Waters and Water Supplies*, 6th ed., ch. xx.

<sup>4</sup> Kershaw, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

use. If I were not accustomed to commend any but the most modern styles of architecture, I might still say 'The new chamber of the House of Commons is very good Gothic revival'. I might mean this in several senses. The first is that in which it is equivalent to 'a good example to choose, if one is seeking to illustrate the typical features of Gothic revival' or 'a good specimen of Gothic revival'. This is a specialized evaluative sense, with which we are not here concerned. I might mean, on the other hand, 'genuinely preferable to most other examples of Gothic revival, and therefore to be commended *within* the class of Gothic revival buildings, though not within the class of buildings in general'. With this sense, too, we are not now concerned; it is a commendatory use, with a limited class of comparison (8. 2). The sense with which we are concerned is that in which it means, roughly, 'the sort of Gothic revival building about which a certain sort of people—you know who—would say "that is a good building"'. It is characteristic of this use of 'good' that in expanding it we often want to put the word 'good' inside inverted commas; hence the name. We are, in this use, not making a value-judgement ourselves, but alluding to the value-judgements of other people. This type of use is extremely important for the logic of moral judgements, in which it has caused some confusion.

It is to be noticed that it is easiest to use 'good' in an inverted-commas sense when a certain class of people, who are sufficiently numerous and prominent for their value-judgements to be well known (e.g. the 'best' people in any field), have a rigid standard of commendation for that class of object. In such cases, the inverted-commas use can verge into an *ironic* use, in which not only is no commendation being given, but rather the reverse. If I had a low opinion of Carlo Dolci, I might say 'If you want to see a really "good" Carlo Dolci, go and look at the one in . . . '.

There is another use in which the absence of evaluative content is not sufficiently obvious to the speaker for us to call it either an inverted-commas or an ironic use. This is the *conventional* use, in which the speaker is merely paying lip-service to a convention, by commending, or saying commendatory things about, an object just because everyone else does. I might, if I myself had no preference at all about the design of furniture, still say 'This piece of furniture is of good design', not because I wished to guide my own or anyone else's choice of furniture, but simply because I had been taught the characteristics which are generally held to be criteria of good design, and wished to show that I had 'good taste' in furniture. It would be difficult in such a case to say whether I was evaluating the furniture or not. If I were not a logician, I should not ask myself the questions which would determine whether I was. Such a question would be 'If someone (not connected in any way with the

furniture trade), consistently and regardless of cost filled his house with furniture not conforming to the canons by which you judge the design of this furniture to be good, would you regard that as evidence that he did not agree with you?' If I replied 'No, I would not; for what furniture is of good design is one question, and what furniture one chooses for oneself is another', then we might conclude that I had not been really commending the design by calling it good, but only paying lip-service to a convention. We shall recur to this sort of cross-examination later (11. 2).

These are only some of the many ways in which we use the word 'good'. A logician cannot do justice to the infinite subtlety of language; all he can do is to point out some of the main features of our use of a word, and thereby put people on their guard against the main dangers. A full understanding of the logic of value-terms can only be achieved by continual and sensitive attention to the way we use them.

# Naturalism\*

I SHOULD like first of all to state as precisely as I can that proposition or those propositions with which in part, at least, naturalism is to be identified. For this purpose, I should like to take sentences straight out of the test tube—a much more authentic source even than the horse's mouth. Once having identified these sentences, I intend to examine them in order to discover further how to deal with them. Are the sentences in question exclamatory, or empirical, or are they tautologies?

The sentences which I am to quote are sentences in which their authors, respectively, aim to define naturalism. These sentences fall into two groups, and the distinction between them will immediately be evident. Here now are three in the first group. The first is from Edel. Here it is: "Reliance on scientific method together with an appreciation of the primacy of matter, and the pervasiveness of change, I take to be the central points of naturalism as a philosophic outlook."<sup>1</sup> The second is from Hook: "What unites them all is the whole-hearted acceptance of scientific method as the only reliable way of reaching truth about the world, nature, society, and man. The least common denominator of all historic naturalisms, therefore, is not so much a set of specific doctrines as the method of scientific or rational empiricism."<sup>2</sup> The third is from Dewey; it runs: "It suffices here to note that the naturalist is one who has respect for the conclusions of natural science."<sup>3</sup>

Now these three sentences agree in identifying naturalism with a

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<sup>1</sup> *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, edited by Y. H. Krikorian, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

certain attitude toward scientific method, variously described as "reliance upon" "whole-hearted acceptance of," and "respect for." Every naturalist is one who maintains an attitude similar to the attitude here described. He is excited about something. The excitement may vary in intensity, but in some degree naturalists all share it. This is not difficult to understand. In many cases, no doubt such excitement is the spontaneous overflow of new curiosities looking forward to tomorrow. There are secrets in 10,000 boxes, and you have opened forty, and know now how to go on opening a box a day for the rest of your life. What a feast for eager eyes! Who has not shaken a box and wondered, keyless, what was inside it—and later, furnished with a key, found out? Precious key! Well, a naturalist is a man with 10,000 unopened boxes, newly furnished with a key. No wonder he dances, key in hand up-raised, among the boxes.

But is this idle curiosity, idle secrets for idle eyes, and is only half the motive of the naturalists' dance. For in those boxes snuggled away out of men's sight is the furniture of the land of hearts' desire. Here is a box of the beauty that will not fade in the rain. Here is a heart that will not fail, a pump with scrutable controls. Here are pellets for stretching the hours, and wobbling all dimensions. Here are new snuffers for old pains and here are new pleasures for old duffers. Besides, there are new and quick get-aways, new smashers, new glue better than love, daisies that will tell even what the old ones wouldn't, rapid transit swifter than *gloria mundi*, lightning to keep your orange-juice cold, falling water to dry your feet, shocks to give you peace, a drop or two to make you jump, babies delivered in cellophane, bloodless wars, holocaust by button, one big rumble for all last "whimpers," a piece of powder for a gland, teeth from Dupont's, everlasting shoes, a feather to lighten your load, suspenders to keep up your courage, a new Joseph for all your dreams, cant about what man can, the last straw, and so on from 9,000 and more other boxes. So the naturalist does his dazzle dance. Who then would not accept scientific method, and prefer to go to Babylon by candle-light? Scientific method is successful.

So far then there is no issue, no controversy, and by that token we may be sure that we have not yet ventured to be philosophical. Be reminded, then, of what so far we missed and be prepared to resist. Mr. Hook speaks of "the whole-hearted acceptance of scientific method as the only reliable way of reaching truth." And now we are prepared to introduce that second group of sentences. In this group are these sentences: The first from Dennes, which is this: "There is for naturalism no knowledge except of the type ordinarily called scientific,"<sup>4</sup> and this one from Kriko-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.



rian: "For naturalism as a philosophy, the universal applicability of the experimental method is a basic belief."<sup>5</sup> By the pricking of the hair on your chinny chin chin I realize that these are philosophic statements.

Let us now consider these sentences, with special attention to the phrases: "the only reliable way," "no knowledge except," "the universal applicability of." Obviously the point of such sentences is that other men have spoken of "other reliable ways," of "knowledge other than," of "a certain inapplicability." Notice first the form of Dennes's sentence. Mr. Ringling might say: "There is for Ringling Brothers no elephant except of the type ordinarily called big." Does Mr. Ringling intend to deny there are any little elephants? Does he mean that besides Jumbo and Mumbo there is no little Nimblo? I think he means no more than that there is a difference between big elephants and little elephants, and that Mr. Ringling has no use for little elephants. If you tried to sell him one, he wouldn't buy. He can't use any. Or try this sentence: "For all the boys in our alley, there's no girl but pretty Sally." What, have the boys in our alley seen no girl but pretty Sally? Don't be silly. Of course, they know Helen and Ruth and Betty. It's just a way of saying that above all the girls they know, they prefer Sally.

And this is now the way in which we are to understand Mr. Dennes? Does he mean to be stating a preference? Mr. Ringling says; "There are really no elephants but big ones," and the boys in our alley say: "There's really no girl but Sally." So Mr. Dennes: "There's really no knowledge but. . . ." In this case, of course, Mr. Dennes might have admitted other types of knowledge too, but would in this instance merely have intended to say: "Well, so long as I have my choice, let mine be scientific." In this case, once more there would be no issue. If Mr. Dennes prefers blondes or gas-heat or lemonade, or a hard mattress or scientific knowledge, well, that's all there is to it. I think that this is certainly something like what Dennes is saying, but not quite.

Before we settle these matters, let us inspect Krikorian's sentence. It is: "For naturalism as a philosophy, the universal applicability of the experimental method is a basic belief." Consider the parallel sentence of the vacuum cleaner salesman: "For vacuumism as a philosophy, the universal applicability of the suction nozzle is a basic belief." He may argue to himself: "If I ever give this up, I'll never sell another vacuum cleaner. It is basic." To the house-wife who asks: "And can you use it to dust books?" he replies: "Of course." And when he shows her and finds that it does not do so well, does he deny the universal applicability of the nozzle? No such thing. He may complain that he himself is not

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

skillful, or that what seems like dust to the house-wife is not dust. The universal applicability of the nozzle is now the touchstone of dust. If the nozzle is applicable, it's dust. If it is not applicable, it is not dust. Is Krikorian's statement now like the statement of the vacuum-cleaner salesman? Well, for the moment, I should like to say that it is, and then to add, before I breathe, that it isn't. And for the next moment I should like to postpone my decision.

It will be remembered that at the outset I proposed to determine whether the sentences defining naturalism were exclamatory, or empirical, or tautologies. I think, though I have made no point of it, that naturalists are very fervent. But I also think now that without further trial of these sentences it will be misleading to classify them in either way. I propose accordingly to dandle them some more before deciding. Let us, then, just playfully bounce them.

There are, in any case, at least three ways of frisking a philosophical theory. You may try to misunderstand it which in philosophy requires almost no effort at all. Almost anyone can at once misunderstand a philosophical statement. This method is very popular, very chuckling, but also very exasperating. In any case I have already forsworn the obvious advantages of this and must resort to something else. Fortunately there are other ways. You may then in the second place try to refute the theory in question. In this case you settle upon some clear and plausible import of the theory, and then you discover some contradiction. The contradiction must be hidden, subtle, and for the best results should pop out like a jack-in-the-box. You show that the theory conceals a jack-in-the-theory, which the theory on its face denied. The theory said: "No, no, there's no little jack," and then you pressed a little word, and out popped jack. This method is ideal, absolutely ruinous, guaranteed to fluster. Every philosopher submits to it with modesty, and, after three minutes, with cheers, whenever, that is, he also recognizes the little jack. The most authentic and last case of this sort is, as you will remember, recorded with a new-fangled pen in the reminiscences of a certain Thales whose comment on this has amused many scholars since. His comment is, "Of this too it may be said that all is wet." There is a third method which is this. You may try to understand the theory in question. This is, of course, a very dangerous expedient. It is clear that having understood the theory you may be taken in by it, and so suffer the corruption which you certainly intended at the outset to avoid. On the other hand you may discover that what you have come to understand turns out now to be so trivial that all your effort can scarcely be dignified by the admission. It's quite all right to leap bravely from one's horse to let the blood of a wind-mill, so long as you can keep on calling the wind-mill Beelzebub. But who would

fence with a piece of wood? So the risk is great. There are, however, rewards. A little corruption will no doubt improve everyone

And now I should like to try the second of these methods, refutation. And let us settle without very nice circumspection upon this sentence: "Only scientific method is successful." Can this sentence be refuted?

Now there certainly are people who think that it can be refuted. These refutations take at least two forms. There are first of all people who argue in this way. They say: "The application of scientific method, whatever it is, does involve thinking. Now thinking itself pre-supposes certain facts, namely, the laws of thought. For the truth of these laws there can be no evidence, for any evidence at all would once again pre-suppose them. Hence, since we obviously do know these laws, there obviously is knowledge, other than knowledge arrived at by scientific method." Nor is this all. It is clear that without the application of mathematics, scientific method would have been almost impotent. Now then, mathematics is also knowledge, and it is not commonly maintained even by those who are so excited by scientific method that there is anything experimental about mathematics. Once more, then, there is a type of knowledge, namely, mathematics—ask any mathematician whether he knows mathematics. And this is not knowledge which in any way depends upon scientific method. Both of these considerations seem so obvious that it is very curious there should be naturalists at all. Doesn't the naturalist then know, has he never heard, about the laws of thought and about numbers?

Of course he does and has, and yet he does not admit the refutation. What, then, does he say? Well, bluntly, that what in the proposed refutation is cited as knowledge, is not knowledge at all. There are logicians and there are mathematicians, but in these capacities they are not Knowers. The question here is as to what leads naturalists to speak so curiously, and then, once we have understood this, the further question is whether or not there still remains some intelligible issue as between the naturalist and his refuter. I am not at all certain now that I can represent this matter correctly, but I will do my best. Suppose we admit that knowledge is always about something or other. So if we know that thunder follows lightning, then what we know is something described by that sentence, and not at all to be identified with that sentence. We all know what this means. Now suppose we ask: "Do the laws of thought describe anything? Is that they do not, what you mean by their being laws? Further does  $2 + 2 = 4$  describe something?" If you hesitate over these questions, then I think that you have some inkling as to what the naturalist here has in mind. That thunder follows lightning may be knowledge, since you can very well imagine what it would be like for it to be false.

But that the laws of thought should be false, or that  $2 + 2$  should not equal 4, both of these are inconceivable. This, so far as I can see, is the main motive underlying the statement that logic and mathematics are not knowledge. And so far as at any rate there is no issue. Both the naturalist and the refuter are agreed. Scientific method does not pre-suppose any other type of knowledge. For logic and mathematics are not knowledge.

The issue which we have just now discussed has turned out to be a verbal one. There are, however, related issues which are interesting. We all remember that when Socrates questioned the boy in the *Meno* he showed that the boy knew things which he had never been taught, that these things were true, and that he must have come to know them by recollection. When Kant questioned the same boy he too showed that the boy knew *a priori* things which he had never been taught, that these things were true, and that he came to know them because all little boys are like that. When today the naturalist questions that boy he discovers that boy still answering as he answered Socrates and Kant. He knows his grammar. Where did he get it? Well, grammar and the laws of thought are historical accidents. Who could have predicted that the squirrel would have such a bushy tail? Who could have predicted that a creature without any tail at all should have written the *Iliad*? You never can tell. Now Socrates was amazed at the bright boy, and describes him as a reminiscing soul on tour. He learns his mathematics in one world and is furnished with it, ready for Euclid in the next, a romance of two worlds! Kant too is puzzled by the boy, but not by the origins of his prodigy. Marvelous boy! anticipating the whole structure of the world by being the creator of it. Both Socrates and Kant did not know what we now know. The little boy is an organism, part of a long line of adaptation, missing poisons, dodging rocks, escaping tigers, milking cows, sowing seed, fetching fish, but, most important of all, saying the word. To milk a cow one must have a hand to fit and flush an udder. To say the word one must have an order to fit and flash one's prescience. What is the history of the hand, from hoof to dainty pats upon your cheek? Ask Darwin. What is the history of the laws of thought and  $2 + 2 = 4$ ? Ask Darwin's brother. No one could have predicted what the laws of thought would be, had prediction been possible without the laws of thought.

I have no intention, however, of considering this matter further. The issue appears to be empirical. It is interesting, however, as an illustration of how the naturalist's view of scientific method, and of distinctions involved in it, is intertwined with certain results of the application of scientific method. This is the biologist's view of the origin of the *a priori*. And part of the point here is to insist that the presence of logic and mathematics are as irrelevant to the existence of anything else as is the presence of the

monkey's tail. The tail like the appendix may be positively misleading. There may be a tail and no trees, and no flies. So what about the laws of thought. They too may turn out to be useless. Am I talking nonsense? I'm sorry.

And now there is a second type of refutation. The refuter goes on: "You may be quite right when you say that scientific method is successful. The libraries and the stores are full of its success. But we also know that scientific method has never been justified from a purely intellectual point of view. Now I do not necessarily mean that we know what that justification is, so that once more we have knowledge which is not arrived at by pursuing scientific method. I mean rather that this request for a justification involves a question which can not possibly be answered by any such method. If you tried to answer it in this way, your method would, of course, give rise to the same request. Hence, unless we admit that there are altogether reasonable questions, but no method at all for answering them, there must be at least one method other than scientific method for answering questions. And so it is not true that scientific method alone is successful."

And is the naturalist now quite perturbed by this? He is not. His reply might be as follows: "I think I understand you. You are assuming that a good argument must be tight like a syllogism or like a proof in geometry. That's what you mean by the phrase 'from a purely intellectual point of view.' So you are worried about the uniformity of nature, that every event in nature has a cause, that tomorrow the sun will rise, and tomorrow and tomorrow and petty-paced tomorrow. If you only knew things like this, then you would consider conclusions about fruit flies, about hydrogen, about vitamins, etc., as justified. But actually the conclusions of science are not presumed to be tight in any such sense. Now listen. It's all very simple. Yesterday and today we find uranium, under certain circumstances, behaving as though it were very angry. Tomorrow it is angry again. Next week it still behaves angrily. So we go on expecting that it will continue to do so and it does. If, however, in four weeks it should quite suddenly be mild and bleat like a little lamb, this would certainly surprise us. Who knows, however, a little angry uranium may be enough to put all the remainder fast asleep, so that even bombardment could scarcely make it yawn. Scientists after all are only human. They do no more than record the genesis of their expectations. So what we mean, in any case, by the success of scientific method is something so modest that it requires no such justification. It is justified, if you like, in the same way that your expectations generally are. If you expect to eat at six, and do eat at six, what more do you want?"

This reply is, I take it, sufficient. Refutation has failed. If you claim

for science that its arguments require some necessary propositions about the order of nature, then obviously the justification of these arguments will require them. But the naturalist's account of scientific method need not involve any such necessary propositions. So once again, that scientific method is successful does not pre-suppose that there is besides this some other method.

The statement of naturalism, then, involves no contradiction. Can we not, however, move him by confronting him with a discrepant instance? No. But let's see.

Mr. Dennes says that there are no other proofs. *X*, which vaunteth itself a proof, comes up and says: "Am I a proof? They call me a proof." So the doctor touches a nerve, the nerve of the argument, and says: "No, you're not a proof." *X* replies: "But I wear a 'since' and a 'therefore'." The doctor says: "And that's all. You've no nerve, so you're not a proof." He knows what he means by a "proof." Other candidates come up, each asking: "Am I a proof?" And the doctor separates them. Now up comes a philosophical proof. "Am I a proof?" The answer is: "No." But the proof now argues: "That's what you say, and I see what you mean, I am not the kind of proof you are talking about. My friends do not use the word 'proof' at all in the way in which you do. I'm a proof all right, but you just don't like me. So you won't call me proof. It's as though I asked you 'Am I a darling?' and you had another sweetheart, and so, of course, you said: 'No.' All the same I am a darling."

This, now, is a very difficult situation. Nobody is lying. Nobody is insincere. Does the doctor see something which the philosophical argument does not see? Maybe. He sees both types of argument, and sees that the one is good and the other is not. And what does the philosophical argument see? It sees both arguments and says that both are good. So once more if the argument asks: "And why do you say I am not a proof?" the doctor must say: "Because you are not like this." And that is all there is to it. And if this is all, then, clearly, the philosophical argument may feel thoroughly vindicated. If all the doctor means is that a philosophical argument is different from an empirical argument, the argument may respond: "Of course, that's true, but it has no bearing upon my status. After all I am another man's darling."

Suppose that he goes on to say: "No, I don't mean simply that you are not like this argument. What I mean is this: 'This type of argument is successful, and you are not.' " The response is: "And what is the criterion of success? If you mean that by means of me you can never predict the weather, well, of course, that's true. But if you ask those who love me whether I am successful, you'll get a different answer. I determine in some much subtler way the spiritual weather, and that not by prediction

but by seasoning all time and eternity. Success! How would you like to be a thinking substance?"

So far as I can see there is nothing further for the doctor to do. He has judged the proof, but he can not now justify that judgment to the argument. There is no agreed-upon principle of adjudication. Further argument is futile. To each other they must continue to be queer and incomprehensible. It's as though the boys in our alley all sang out: "There's no girl but pretty Sally," and someone objected: "Oh, but that can't be!" This didn't quiet the boys. They said: "Oh, you forget that once Eve was the only girl. So it can be." And then along came Helen. "Tut! Tut!" said she, "Look at me. I'm a girl," to which the boys responded, "No, you're not." And when she said "Prove it," they laughed, told her to go home and be quiet. "You're just a girl out of a store window, that's what you are."

So far I have shown that you can not refute this apparent main thesis of naturalism. You can not do it by detecting any contradiction, nor by adducing any evidence. And you can not do this because there is no thesis. When Mr. Krikorian speaks of this sentence as a basic belief, this is strictly a mistake. There is no belief at all. There is no belief because nothing has been said which could be false.

How, then, are these several sentences to be interpreted? I think that something like this may do. These sentences are strictly an enunciation of policy. In effect they say: "Let us be scientific." And negatively: "No more metaphysics." In a sober and quiet way a naturalist might say: "I've tried to do metaphysics. I can't grasp it. So I've turned to matters within my reach and grasp. I can do botany so much better. Or I can cut hair or polish teeth." If this were now what naturalists did, there would, I think, be no mystery at all. What causes the difficulty is that having said: "We are going to do science," they do not do science. If a man who sold groceries suddenly tired of selling groceries, exclaimed: "Enough! I am going to wash automobiles," and went out and washed automobiles, there would be no puzzle about this. But if repeated his resolution frequently, put on his hat and coat and walked to the door, and then started for the other side of the store to sort potatoes, what then? Well, so it is.

Is, then, naturalism, in any case, a good policy? I think that the naturalists' defense is this. Metaphysics and science aim at the same thing. Metaphysics fails. Science succeeds. Accordingly, naturalism is nothing but adoption of the successful policy. Who, to get home, would deliberately take the way that won't get him there? And the naturalist might go on. Even though it were true that metaphysics and science do not aim at the same thing, it is clear that metaphysics fails in whatever it aims at,

whereas science succeeds. How foolish, then, to engage in failure. So in either case naturalism is the best policy.

Once more, then, the dispute breaks out. Do metaphysics and science aim at the same thing? Is metaphysics a failure? Disregarding, for the moment, the obscurity of both these questions, I should, throwing my words about wildly, make this noise. Metaphysics and science do not aim at the same thing. And now I should first like to explain this. Metaphysics arises out of the fact that men come to have a variety of beliefs, beliefs about God, about how they should live, about the material world, about their own other-worldly destiny, etc. Some expurgated people escape nearly all such beliefs, but most people either believe or are uneasy. In any case, with respect to such beliefs, men have tried to do two things. They have first tried to prove that what they believe is true. In this respect there certainly is an analogy between science and metaphysics, and this may be what justifies the naturalist thesis. For if he now also holds that it is precisely in this respect that metaphysics has failed, namely, in its attempt to prove, then I, at least, am inclined to agree that he is right. For there is in metaphysics no criterion of proof. I take it that there is among metaphysicians no agreement upon even one purported proof. If, then, the purpose of metaphysics is to prove, metaphysics provides no intelligible account of what this could be.

This is not, however, the whole story. Men have also tried in their metaphysical adventures to weave together the contents of their beliefs into some coherent pattern, to keep more steadfastly before their minds the scene of their hopes, their aspirations, and their fears. In the past the aim to prove has clouded and vexed this endeavor by an ungainly and tortured vocabulary, but, even so the present ruins in some way, no doubt, served. I expect that varieties of belief will continue, and that this motive to elaborate and to fashion a crazy or a sane quilt in which to wrap oneself against all temporary weathers will continue. And I do not mind. I shall continue to be entertained by it, and will in one instance even love it. Nevertheless, I think that metaphysics with this single aim will, when successful, be much more like poetry or a novel than like the metaphysics which, with divided and obscure aims, has puzzled and pleased men in the past.

Naturalism, as a policy, is then no mystery. It has seized upon a certain clear notion of proof, and in the light of this clear notion of proof it is easy to see from what defect metaphysics has come to be so sick. Metaphysics will walk again only when it surrenders pretension to proof, and, as humbly as the Apostles' Creed, begins its words with: I believe!



# *The Liberal Perspective*

A MAN whose general outlook on life may be validly characterized as "liberal" prizes as his highest values freedom, reason, and individuality. There are several reasons for espousing the liberal world-view. Some are attitudes and others reasoned convictions.

From the psychological perspective of attitudes, we can say that the liberal man is secure in his values and is, in general, unafraid. Differences and opposition do not threaten him. A student may feel that campus organizations representing views inimical to his own should be suppressed. The security which his own views give him is tenuous, and as a consequence he fears the promulgation of contrary ideas. This student is not a liberal.

On the other hand, from a rational perspective, we can say that there are many utilitarian considerations on which to base liberal convictions. First, to repress views different from our own may well lead to the suppression of important truths. Second, there is no practical way to preserve truth and destroy error. We do not really know who has the truth, and if we did know, only a general massacre would ensure its establishment. Not only is a general massacre undesirable on other grounds, but it may just as easily be directed against the holders of the "truth" as against the advocates of "error."

Finally, regardless of the questions of truth and secure values, the liberal man adopts reverence for individual subjectivity, or inwardness, as his supreme principle of morality. Every individual subjectivity is precious, be it one of a saint or one of a criminal.

Thus, within the bounds of self-protection, individual freedom, for the liberal, is to be preserved above all else.

These attitudes and convictions establish the liberal perspective in such areas of human concern as politics, ethics, and religion.

The political liberal insists that freedoms of speech, worship, assembly, movement, and the like be preserved unequivocally and, whenever possible, maximized. He would make every effort to resist restrictions in these areas and is willing to take serious risks for the sake of preserving civil liberties.

The religious liberal seeks to avoid dogmas of all kinds and bases his beliefs on reason rather than on revelation. He sees religion principally as an ethical, social, and emotional concern rather than as a supernatural manifestation and a guarantee for salvation in an afterlife.

The liberal in ethics likewise avoids dogmas, deeming problems of human conduct and the good life not subject to scientific determination. Each man must thus have liberty to work out his ethical problems for himself; and his fellow men must respect his results.

The following selections illustrate these characterizations of liberalism.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- BARBU, ZEVEDEL. *Democracy and Dictatorship*  
 BARKER, SIR ERNEST. *Principles of Social and Political Theory*  
 DEWEY, JOHN. *A Common Faith*  
 DEWEY, JOHN. *Creative Democracy—The Task before Us*  
 DEWEY, JOHN. *The Future of Liberalism*  
 DEWEY, JOHN. *Philosophy and Democracy*  
 FRANKEL, CHARLES. *The Case for Modern Man*  
 HAYEK, F. A. *The Road to Serfdom*  
 KIRK, RUSSELL A. *The Conservative Mind*  
 KIRK, RUSSELL A. *A Program for Conservatives*  
 LASKI, HAROLD. *The Rise of Liberalism*

ERICH FROMM

# Escape from Freedom\*

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE AMBIGUITY OF FREEDOM\*

BEFORE WE come to our main topic—the question of what freedom means to modern man, and why and how he tries to escape from it—we must first discuss a concept which may seem to be somewhat removed from actuality. It is, however, a premise necessary for the understanding of the analysis of freedom in modern society. I mean the concept that freedom characterizes human existence as such, and furthermore that its meaning changes according to the degree of man's awareness and conception of himself as an independent and separate being.

The social history of man started with his emerging from a state of oneness with the natural world to an awareness of himself as an entity separate from surrounding nature and men. Yet this awareness remained very dim over long periods of history. The individual continued to be closely tied to the natural and social world from which he emerged; while being partly aware of himself as a separate entity, he felt also part of the world around him. The growing process of the emergence of the individual from his original ties, a process which we may call "individuation," seems to have reached its peak in modern history in the centuries between the Reformation and the present.

In the life history of an individual we find the same process. A child is born when it is no longer one with its mother and becomes a biological entity separate from her. Yet, while this biological separation is the beginning of individual human existence, the child remains functionally one with its mother for a considerable period.

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\* From *Escape from Freedom*, by Erich Fromm, Chapter II, pp. 24-27, Chapter IV, pp. 103-135. Copyright 1941 by Erich Fromm. Reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

To the degree to which the individual, figuratively speaking, has not yet completely severed the umbilical cord which fastens him to the outside world, he lacks freedom; but these ties give him security and a feeling of belonging and of being rooted somewhere. I wish to call these ties that exist before the process of individuation has resulted in the complete emergence of an individual "primary ties." They are organic in the sense that they are a part of normal human development; they imply a lack of individuality, but they also give security and orientation to the individual. They are the ties that connect the child with its mother, the member of a primitive community with his clan and nature, or the medieval man with the Church and his social caste. Once the stage of complete individuation is reached and the individual is free from these primary ties, he is confronted with a new task: to orient and root himself in the world and to find security in other ways than those which were characteristic of his preindividualistic existence. Freedom then has a different meaning from the one it had before this stage of evolution is reached. It is necessary to stop here and to clarify these concepts by discussing them more concretely in connection with individual and social development.

The comparatively sudden change from foetal into human existence and the cutting off of the umbilical cord mark the independence of the infant from the mother's body. But this independence is only real in the crude sense of the separation of the two bodies. In a functional sense, the infant remains part of the mother. It is fed, carried, and taken care of in every vital respect by the mother. Slowly the child comes to regard the mother and other objects as entities apart from itself. One factor in this process is the neurological and the general physical development of the child, its ability to grasp objects—physically and mentally—and to master them. Through its own activity it experiences a world outside of itself. The process of individuation is furthered by that of education. This process entails a number of frustrations and prohibitions, which change the role of the mother into that of a person with different aims which conflict with the child's wishes, and often into that of a hostile and dangerous person.<sup>1</sup> This antagonism, which is one part of the educational process though by no means the whole, is an important factor in sharpening the distinction between the "I" and the "thou."

A few months elapse after birth before the child even recognizes another person as such and is able to react with a smile, and it is years before the

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted here that instinctual frustration *per se* does not arouse hostility. It is the thwarting of expansiveness, the breaking of the child's attempt to assert himself, the hostility radiating from parents—in short, the atmosphere of suppression—which create in the child the feeling of powerlessness and the hostility springing from it.

child ceases to confuse itself with the universe.<sup>2</sup> Until then it shows the particular kind of egocentricity typical of children, an egocentricity which does not exclude tenderness for and interest in others, since "others" are not yet definitely experienced as really separate from itself. For the same reason the child's leaning on authority in these first years has also a different meaning from the leaning on authority later on. The parents, or whoever the authority may be, are not yet regarded as being a fundamentally separate entity; they are part of the child's universe, and this universe is still part of the child; submission to them, therefore, has a different quality from the kind of submission that exists once two individuals have become really separate.

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## THE TWO ASPECTS OF FREEDOM FOR MODERN MAN\*

The previous chapter has been devoted to an analysis of the psychological meaning of the main doctrines of Protestantism. It showed that new religious doctrines were an answer to psychic needs which in themselves were brought about by the collapse of the medieval social system and by the beginnings of capitalism. The analysis centered about the problem of freedom in its twofold meaning; it showed that freedom *from* the traditional bonds of medieval society, though giving the individual a new feeling of independence, at the same time made him feel alone and isolated, filled him with doubt and anxiety, and drove him into new submission and into a compulsive and irrational activity.

In this chapter, I wish to show that the further development of capitalistic society affected personality in the same direction which it had started to take in the period of the Reformation.

By the doctrines of Protestantism, man was psychologically prepared for the role he was to play under the modern industrial system. This system, its practice, and the spirit which grew out of it, reaching every aspect of life, molded the whole personality of man and accentuated the contradictions which we have discussed in the previous chapter: it developed the individual—and made him more helpless; it increased freedom—and created dependencies of a new kind. We do not attempt to describe the effect of capitalism on the whole character structure of man, since we are focused only on one aspect of this general problem: the dialectic character of the process of growing freedom. Our aim will be to show that the structure of modern society affects man in two ways

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1932. p. 407. . . .

\* Chapter IV.

simultaneously: he becomes more independent, self-reliant, and critical, and he becomes more isolated, alone, and, afraid. The understanding of the whole problem of freedom depends on the very ability to see both sides of the process and not to lose track of one side while following the other.

This is difficult because conventionally we think in nondialectical terms and are prone to doubt whether two contradictory trends can result simultaneously from one cause. Furthermore, the negative side of freedom, the burden which it puts upon man, is difficult to realize, especially for those whose heart is with the cause of freedom. Because in the fight for freedom in modern history the attention was focused upon combating *old* forms of authority and restraint, it was natural that one should feel that the more these traditional restraints were eliminated, the more freedom one had gained. We fail sufficiently to recognize, however, that although man has rid himself from old enemies of freedom, new enemies of a different nature have arisen; enemies which are not essentially external restraints, but internal factors blocking the full realization of the freedom of personality. We believe, for instance, that freedom of worship constitutes one of the final victories for freedom. We do not sufficiently recognize that while it is a victory against those powers of Church and State which did not allow man to worship according to his own conscience, the modern individual has lost to a great extent the inner capacity to have faith in anything which is not provable by the methods of the natural sciences. Or, to choose another example, we feel that freedom of speech is the last step in the march of victory of freedom. We forget that, although freedom of speech constitutes an important victory in the battle against *old* restraints, modern man is in a position where much of what "he" thinks and says are the things that everybody else thinks and says; that he has not acquired the ability to think originally—that is, for himself—which alone gives meaning to his claim that nobody can interfere with the expression of his thoughts. Again, we are proud that in his conduct of life man has become free from external authorities, which tell him what to do and what not to do. We neglect the role of the anonymous authorities like public opinion and "common sense," which are so powerful because of our profound readiness to conform to the expectations everybody has about ourselves and our equally profound fear of being different. In other words, we are fascinated by the growth of freedom from powers *outside* of ourselves and are blinded to the fact of *inner* restraints, compulsions, and fears, which tend to undermine the meaning of the victories freedom has won against its traditional enemies. We therefore are prone to think that the problem of freedom is exclusively that of gaining still *more* freedom of the kind we have gained in the course of

modern history, and to believe that the defense of freedom against such powers that deny such freedom is all that is necessary. We forget that, although each of the liberties which have been won must be defended with utmost vigor, the problem of freedom is not only a quantitative one, but a qualitative one; that we not only have to preserve and increase the traditional freedom, but that we have to gain a new kind of freedom, one which enables us to realize our own individual self, to have faith in this self and in life.

Any critical evaluation of the effect which the industrial system had on this kind of inner freedom must start with the full understanding of the enormous progress which capitalism has meant for the development of human personality. As a matter of fact, any critical appraisal of modern society which neglects this side of the picture must prove to be rooted in an irrational romanticism and is suspect of criticizing capitalism, not for the sake of progress, but for the sake of the destruction of the most important achievements of man in modern history.

What Protestantism had started to do in freeing man spiritually, capitalism continued to do mentally, socially, and politically. Economic freedom was the basis of this development, the middle class was its champion. The individual was no longer bound by a fixed social system, based on tradition and with a comparatively small margin for personal advancement beyond the traditional limits. He was allowed and expected to succeed in personal economic gains as far as his diligence, intelligence, courage, thrift, or luck would lead him. His was the chance of success, his was the risk to lose and to be one of those killed or wounded in the fierce economic battle in which each one fought against everybody else. Under the feudal system the limits of his life expansion had been laid out before he was born; but under the capitalistic system the individual, particularly the member of the middle class, had a chance—in spite of many limitations—to succeed on the basis of his own merits and actions. He saw a goal before his eyes toward which he could strive and which he often had a good chance to attain. He learned to rely on himself, to make responsible decisions, to give up both soothing and terrifying superstitions. Man became increasingly free from the bondage of nature; he mastered natural forces to a degree unheard and undreamed of in previous history. Men became equal; differences of caste and religion, which once had been natural boundaries blocking the unification of the human race, disappeared, and men learned to recognize each other as human beings. The world became increasingly free from mystifying elements; man began to see himself objectively and with fewer and fewer illusions. Politically freedom grew too. On the strength of its economic position the rising middle class could conquer political power and the

newly won political power created increased possibilities for economic progress. The great revolutions in England and France and the fight for American independence are the milestones marking this development. The peak in the evolution of freedom in the political sphere was the modern democratic state based on the principle of equality of all men and the equal right of everybody to share in the government by representatives of his own choosing. Each one was supposed to be able to act according to his own interest and at the same time with a view to the common welfare of the nation.

In one word, capitalism not only freed man from traditional bonds, but it also contributed tremendously to the increasing of positive freedom, to the growth of an active, critical, responsible self.

However, while this was *one* effect capitalism had on the process of growing freedom, at the same time it made the individual more alone and isolated and imbued him with a feeling of insignificance and powerlessness.

The first factor to be mentioned here is one of the general characteristics of capitalistic economy: the principle of individualistic activity. In contrast to the feudal system of the Middle Ages under which everybody had a fixed place in an ordered and transparent social system, capitalistic economy put the individual entirely on his own feet. What he did, how he did it, whether he succeeded or whether he failed, was entirely his own affair. That this principle furthered the process of individualization is obvious and is always mentioned as an important item on the credit side of modern culture. But in furthering "freedom from," this principle helped to sever all ties between one individual and the other and thereby isolated and separated the individual from his fellow men. This development had been prepared by the teachings of the Reformation. In the Catholic Church the relationship of the individual to God had been based on membership in the Church. The Church was the link between him and God, thus on the one hand restricting his individuality, but on the other hand letting him face God as an integral part of a group. Protestantism made the individual face God alone. Faith in Luther's sense was an entirely subjective experience and with Calvin the conviction of salvation also had this same subjective quality. The individual facing God's might alone could not help feeling crushed and seeking salvation in complete submission. Psychologically this spiritual individualism is not too different from the economic individualism. In both instances the individual is completely alone and in his isolation faces the superior power, be it of God, of competitors, or of impersonal economic forces. *The individualistic relationship to God was the psychological preparation for the individualistic character of man's secular activities.*



While the individualistic character of the economic system is an undisputed fact and only the effect this economic individualism has in increasing the individual's aloneness may appear doubtful, the point we are going to discuss now contradicts some of the most widespread conventional concepts about capitalism. These concepts assume that in modern society man has become the center and purpose of all activity, that what he does he does for himself, that the principle of self-interest and egotism are the all-powerful motivations of human activity. It follows from what has been said in the beginning of this chapter that we believe this to be true to some extent. Man has done much for himself, for his own purposes, in these last four hundred years. Yet much of what seemed to him to be *his* purpose was not his, if we mean by "him," not "the worker," "the manufacturer," but the concrete human being with all his emotional, intellectual, and sensuous potentialities. Besides the affirmation of the individual which capitalism brought about, it also led to a self-negation and asceticism which is the direct continuation of the Protestant spirit.

In order to explain this thesis we must mention first a fact which has been already stated in the previous chapter. In the medieval system capital was the servant of man, but in the modern system it became his master. In the medieval world economic activities were a means to an end; the end was life itself, or—as the Catholic Church understood it—the spiritual salvation of man. Economic activities are necessary, even riches can serve God's purposes, but all external activity has only significance and dignity as far as it furthers the aims of life. Economic activity and the wish for gain for its own sake appeared as irrational to the medieval thinker as their absence appears to modern thought.

In capitalism economic activity, success, material gains, become ends in themselves. It becomes man's fate to contribute to the growth of the economic system, to amass capital, not for purposes of his own happiness or salvation, but as an end in itself. Man became a cog in the vast economic machine—an important one if he had much capital, an insignificant one if he had none—but always a cog to serve a purpose outside of himself. This readiness for submission of one's self to extrahuman ends was actually prepared by Protestantism, although nothing was further from Luther's or Calvin's mind than the approval of such supremacy of economic activities. But in their theological teaching they had laid the ground for this development by breaking man's spiritual backbone, his feeling of dignity and pride, by teaching him that activity had to further aims outside of himself.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, one main point in Luther's teachings was his emphasis on the evilness of human nature, the uselessness

of his will and of his efforts. Calvin placed the same emphasis on the wickedness of man and put in the center of his whole system the idea that man must humiliate his self-pride to the utmost; and furthermore, that the purpose of man's life is exclusively God's glory and nothing of his own. Thus Luther and Calvin psychologically prepared man for the role which he had to assume in modern society: of feeling his own self to be insignificant and of being ready to subordinate his life exclusively for purposes which were not his own. Once man was ready to become nothing but the means for the glory of a God who represented neither justice nor love, he was sufficiently prepared to accept the role of a servant to the economic machine—and eventually a "Führer."

The subordination of the individual as a means to economic ends is based on the peculiarities of the capitalistic mode of production, which makes the accumulation of capital the purpose and aim of economic activity. One works for profit's sake, but the profit one makes is not made to be spent but to be invested as new capital; this increased capital brings new profits which again are invested, and so on in a circle. There were of course always capitalists who spent money for luxuries or as "conspicuous waste"; but the classic representatives of capitalism enjoyed working—not spending. This principle of accumulating capital instead of using it for consumption is the premise of the grandiose achievements of our modern industrial system. If man had not had the ascetic attitude to work and the desire to invest the fruits of his work for the purpose of developing the productive capacities of the economic system, our progress in mastering nature never could have been made; it is this growth of the productive forces of society which for the first time in history permits us to visualize a future in which the continual struggle for the satisfaction of material needs will cease. Yet, while the principle of work for the sake of the accumulation of capital objectively is of enormous value for the progress of mankind, subjectively it has made man work for extrapersonal ends, made him a servant to the very machine he built, and thereby has given him a feeling of personal insignificance and powerlessness.

So far we have discussed those individuals in modern society who had capital and were able to turn their profits into new capital investment. Regardless of whether they were big or small capitalists, their life was devoted to the fulfillment of their economic function, the amassing of capital. But what about those who had no capital and who had to earn a living by selling their labor? The psychological effect of their economic position was not much different from that of the capitalist. In the first place, being employed meant that they were dependent on the laws of the market, on prosperity and depression, on the effect of technical improvements in the hands of their employer. They were manipulated

directly by him, and to them he became the representative of a superior power to which they had to submit. This was especially true for the position of workers up to and during the nineteenth century. Since then the trade-union movement has given the worker some power of his own and thereby is changing the situation in which he is nothing but an object of manipulation.

But aside from this direct and personal dependence of the worker on the employer, he, like the whole of society, has been imbued by the spirit of asceticism and submission to extrapersonal ends which we have described as characteristic for the owner of capital. This is not surprising: In any society the spirit of the whole culture is determined by the spirit of those groups that are most powerful in that society. This is so partly because these groups have the power to control the educational system, schools, church, press, theater, and thereby to imbue the whole population with their own ideas; furthermore, these powerful groups carry so much prestige that the lower classes are more than ready to accept and imitate their values and to identify themselves psychologically.

Up to this point we have maintained that the mode of capitalistic production made man an instrument for suprapersonal economic purposes, and increased the spirit of asceticism and individual insignificance for which Protestantism had been the psychological preparation. This thesis, however, conflicts with the fact that modern man seems to be motivated not by an attitude of sacrifice and asceticism but, on the contrary, by an extreme degree of egotism and by the pursuit of self-interest. How can we reconcile the fact that objectively he became a servant to ends which were not his, and yet that subjectively he believed himself to be motivated by his self-interest? How can we reconcile the spirit of Protestantism and its emphasis on unselfishness with the modern doctrine of egotism which claims, to use Machiavelli's formulation, that egotism is the strongest motive power of human behavior, that the desire for personal advantage is stronger than all moral considerations, that a man would rather see his own father die than lose his fortune? Can this contradiction be explained by the assumption that the emphasis on unselfishness was only an ideology to cover up the underlying egotism? Although this may be true to some extent, we do not believe that this is the full answer. To indicate in what direction the answer seems to lie, we have to concern ourselves with the psychological intricacies of the problem of selfishness.<sup>1</sup>

The assumption underlying the thinking of Luther and Calvin and also that of Kant and Freud, is: Selfishness is identical with self-love. To love

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion of this problem compare the writer's "Selfishness and Self-Love," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 2, No. 4, November, 1939.

others is a virtue, to love oneself is a sin. Furthermore, love for others and love for oneself are mutually exclusive.

Theoretically we meet here with a fallacy concerning the nature of love. Love is not primarily "caused" by a specific object, but a lingering quality in a person which is only actualized by a certain "object". Hatred is a passionate wish for destruction; love is a passionate affirmation of an "object"; it is not an "affect" but an active striving and inner relatedness, the aim of which is the happiness, growth, and freedom of its object.<sup>2</sup> It is a readiness which, in principle, can turn to any person and object—including ourselves. Exclusive love is a contradiction in itself. To be sure, it is not accidental that a certain person becomes the "object" of manifest love. The factors conditioning such a specific choice are too numerous and too complex to be discussed here. The important point, however, is that love for a particular "object" is only the actualization and concentration of lingering love with regard to one person; it is not, as the idea of romantic love would have it, that there is only *the* one person in the world whom one can love, that it is the great chance of one's life to find that person, and that love for him results in a withdrawal from all others. The kind of love which can only be experienced with regard to one person demonstrates by this very fact that it is not love but a sado-masochistic attachment. The basic affirmation contained in love is directed toward the beloved person as an incarnation of essentially human qualities. Love for one person implies love for man as such. Love for man as such is not, as it is frequently supposed to be, an abstraction coming "after" the love for a specific person, or an enlargement of the experience with a specific "object"; it is its premise, although, genetically, it is acquired in the contact with concrete individuals.

From this it follows that my own self, in principle, is as much an object of my love as another person. The affirmation of my own life, happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in the presence of the basic readiness of and ability for such an affirmation. If an individual has this readiness, he has it also toward himself; if he can only "love" others, he cannot love at all.

Selfishness is not identical with self-love but with its very opposite. Selfishness is one kind of greediness. Like all greediness, it contains an insatiability, as a consequence of which there is never any real satisfaction. Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction. Close observation

<sup>2</sup> Sullivan has approached this formulation in his lectures. He states that the era of preadolescence is characterized by the appearance of impulses in interpersonal relations which make for a new type of satisfaction in place of the other person (the chum). Love, according to him, is a situation in which the satisfaction of the loved one is exactly as significant and desirable as that of the lover.

shows that while the selfish person is always anxiously concerned with himself, he is never satisfied, is always restless, always driven by the fear of not getting enough, of missing something, of being deprived of something. He is filled with burning envy of anyone who might have more. If we observe still closer, especially the unconscious dynamics, we find that this type of person is basically not fond of himself, but deeply dislikes himself.

The puzzle in this seeming contradiction is easy to solve. Selfishness is rooted in this very lack of fondness for oneself. The person who is not fond of himself, who does not approve of himself, is in constant anxiety concerning his own self. He has not the inner security which can exist only on the basis of genuine fondness and affirmation. He must be concerned about himself, greedy to get everything for himself, since basically he lacks security and satisfaction. The same holds true with the so-called narcissistic person, who is not so much concerned with getting things for himself as with admiring himself. While on the surface it seems that these persons are very much in love with themselves, they actually are not fond of themselves, and their narcissism—like selfishness—is an overcompensation for the basic lack of self-love. Freud has pointed out that the narcissistic person has withdrawn his love from others and turned it toward his own person. Although the first part of this statement is true, the second is a fallacy. He loves neither others nor himself.

Let us return now to the question which led us into this psychological analysis of selfishness. We found ourselves confronted with the contradiction that modern man believes himself to be motivated by self-interest and yet that actually his life is devoted to aims which are not his own; in the same way that Calvin felt that the only purpose of man's existence was to be not himself but God's glory. We tried to show that selfishness is rooted in the lack of affirmation and love for the real self, that is, for the whole concrete human being with all his potentialities. The "self" in the interest of which modern man acts is the *social* self, a self which is essentially constituted by the role the individual is supposed to play and which in reality is merely the subjective disguise for the objective social function of man in society. Modern selfishness is the greed that is rooted in the frustration of the real self and whose object is the social self. While modern man seems to be characterized by utmost assertion of the self, actually his self has been weakened and reduced to a segment of the total self—intellect and will power—to the exclusion of all other parts of the total personality.

Even if this is true, has not the increasing mastery over nature resulted in an increased strength of the individual self? This is true to some extent, and inasmuch as it is true it concerns the positive side of individual development which we do not want to lose track of. But although man

has reached a remarkable degree of mastery of nature, society is not in control of the very forces it has created. The rationality of the system of production, in its technical aspects, is accompanied by the irrationality of our system of production in its social aspects. Economic crises, unemployment, war, govern man's fate. Man has built his world; he has built factories and houses, he produces cars and clothes, he grows grain and fruit. But he has become estranged from the product of his own hands, he is not really the master any more of the world he has built; on the contrary, this man-made world has become his master, before whom he bows down, whom he tries to placate or to manipulate as best he can: The work of his own hands has become his God. He seems to be driven by self-interest, but in reality his total self with all its concrete potentialities has become an instrument for the purposes of the very machine his hands have built. He keeps up the illusion of being the center of the world, and yet he is pervaded by an intense sense of insignificance and powerlessness which his ancestors once consciously felt toward God.

Modern man's feeling of isolation and powerlessness is increased still further by the character which all his human relationships have assumed. The concrete relationship of one individual to another has lost its direct and human character and has assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality. In all social and personal relations the laws of the market are the rule. It is obvious that the relationship between competitors has to be based on mutual human indifference. Otherwise any one of them would be paralyzed in the fulfillment of his economic tasks—to fight each other and not to refrain from the actual economic destruction of each other if necessary.

The relationship between employer and employee is permeated by the same spirit of indifference. The word "employer" contains the whole story: the owner of capital employs another human being as he "employs" a machine. They both use each other for the pursuit of their economic interests; their relationship is one in which both are means to an end, both are instrumental to each other. It is not a relationship of two human beings who have any interest in the other outside of this mutual usefulness. The same instrumentality is the rule in the relationship between the businessman and his customer. The customer is an object to be manipulated, not a concrete person whose aims the businessman is interested to satisfy. The attitude toward work has the quality of instrumentality; in contrast to a medieval artisan the modern manufacturer is not primarily interested in what he produces; he produces essentially in order to make a profit from his capital investment, and what he produces depends essentially on the market which promises that the investment of capital in a certain branch will prove to be profitable.

Not only the economic, but also the personal relations between men have this character of alienation; instead of relations between human beings, they assume the character of relations between things. But perhaps the most important and the most devastating instance of this spirit of instrumentality and alienation is the individual's relationship to his own self.<sup>3</sup> Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity. The manual laborer sells his physical energy; the businessman, the physician, the clerical employee, sell their "personality." They have to have a "personality" if they are to sell their products or services. This personality should be pleasing, but besides that its possessor should meet a number of other requirements: he should have energy, initiative, this, that, or the other, as his particular position may require. As with any other commodity it is the market which decides the value of these human qualities, yes, even their very existence. If there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he *has* none; just as an unsalable commodity is valueless though it might have its use value. Thus, the self-confidence, the "feeling of self," is merely an indication of what others think of the person. It is not *he* who is convinced of his value regardless of popularity and his success on the market. If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular, he is simply nobody. This dependence of self-esteem on the success of the "personality" is the reason why for modern man popularity has this tremendous importance. On it depends not only whether or not one goes ahead in practical matters, but also whether one can keep up one's self-esteem or whether one falls into the abyss of inferiority feelings.<sup>4</sup>

We have tried to show that the new freedom which capitalism brought for the individual added to the effect which the religious freedom of Protestantism already had had upon him. The individual became more alone, isolated, became an instrument in the hands of overwhelmingly strong forces outside of himself; he became an "individual," but a bewildered and insecure individual. There were factors to help him overcome the overt manifestations of this underlying insecurity. In the first place his self was backed up by the possession of property. "He" as a person and the property he owned could not be separated. A man's clothes or his house were parts of his self just as much as his body. The less he felt he was being somebody the more he needed to have possessions. If the individual had no property or lost it, he was lacking an important part of his

<sup>3</sup> Hegel and Marx have laid the foundations for the understanding of the problem of alienation. Cf. in particular Marx's concept of the "fetishism of commodities" and of the "alienation of labor."

<sup>4</sup> This analysis of self-esteem has been stated clearly and explicitly by Ernest Schachtel in an unpublished lecture on "Self-feeling and the 'Sale' of Personality."

"self" and to a certain extent was not considered to be a full-fledged person, either by others or by himself.

Other factors backing up the self were prestige and power. They are partly the outcome of the possession of property, partly the direct result of success in the fields of competition. The admiration by others and the power over them, added to the support which property gave, backed up the insecure individual self.

For those who had little property and social prestige, the family was a source of individual prestige. There the individual could feel like "somebody." He was obeyed by wife and children, he was the center of the stage, and he naively accepted his role as his natural right. He might be a nobody in his social relations, but he was a king at home. Aside from the family, the national pride (in Europe frequently class-pride) gave him a sense of importance also. Even if he was nobody personally, he was proud to belong to a group which he could feel was superior to other comparable groups.

These factors supporting the weakened self must be distinguished from those factors which we spoke of at the beginning of this chapter: the factual economic and political freedom, the opportunity for individual initiative, the growing rational enlightenment. These latter factors actually strengthened the self and led to the development of individuality, independence, and rationality. The supporting factors, on the other hand, only helped to compensate for insecurity and anxiety. They did not uproot them but covered them up, and thus helped the individual to feel secure consciously; but this feeling was partly only on the surface and lasted only to the extent to which the supporting factors were present.

Any detailed analysis of European and American history of the period between the Reformation and our own day could show how the two contradictory trends inherent in the evolution of "freedom from to freedom to" run parallel—or rather, are continuously interwoven. Unfortunately such an analysis goes beyond the scope of this book and must be reserved for another publication. At some periods and in certain social groups human freedom in its positive sense—strength and dignity of the self—was the dominant factor; broadly speaking this happened in England, France, America, and Germany when the middle class won its victories, economically and politically, over the representatives of an older order. In this fight for positive freedom the middle class could recur to that side of Protestantism which emphasized human autonomy and dignity; while the Catholic Church allied herself with those groups which had to fight the liberation of man in order to preserve their own privileges.

In the philosophical thinking of the modern era we find also that the



two aspects of freedom remain interwoven as they had already been in the theological doctrines of the Reformation. Thus for Kant and Hegel autonomy and freedom of the individual are the central postulates of their systems, and yet they make the individual subordinate to the purposes of an all-powerful state. The philosophers of the period of the French Revolution, and in the nineteenth century Feuerbach, Marx, Stirner, and Nietzsche, have again in an uncompromising way expressed the idea that the individual should not be subject to any purposes external to his own growth or happiness. The reactionary philosophers of the same century, however, explicitly postulated the subordination of the individual under spiritual and secular authority. The second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth show the trend for human freedom in its positive sense at its peak. Not only did the middle class participate in it, but also the working class became an active and free agent, fighting for its own economic aims and at the same time for the broader aims of humanity.

With the monopolistic phase of capitalism as it developed increasingly in the last decades, the respective weight of both trends for human freedom seems to have changed. Those factors which tend to weaken the individual self have gained, while those strengthening the individual have relatively lost in weight. The individual's feeling of powerlessness and aloneness has increased, his "freedom" from all traditional bonds has become more pronounced, his possibilities for individual economic achievement have narrowed down. He feels threatened by gigantic forces and the situation resembles in many ways that of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The most important factor in this development is the increasing power of monopolistic capital. The concentration of capital (not of wealth) in certain sectors of our economic system restricted the possibilities for the success of individual initiative, courage, and intelligence. In those sectors in which monopolistic capital has won its victories the economic independence of many has been destroyed. For those who struggle on, especially for a large part of the middle class, the fight assumes the character of a battle against such odds that the feeling of confidence in personal initiative and courage is replaced by a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness. An enormous though secret power over the whole of society is exercised by a small group, on the decisions of which depends the fate of a large part of society. The inflation in Germany, 1923, or the American crash, 1929, increased the feeling of insecurity and shattered for many the hope of getting ahead by one's own efforts and the traditional belief in the unlimited possibilities of success.

The small or middle-sized businessman who is virtually threatened

by the overwhelming power of superior capital may very well continue to make profits and to preserve his independence; but the threat hanging over his head has increased his insecurity and powerlessness far beyond what it used to be. In his fight against monopolistic competitors he is staked against giants, whereas he used to fight against equals. But the psychological situation of those independent businessmen for whom the development of modern industry has created new economic functions is also different from that of the old independent businessmen. One illustration of this difference is seen in a type of independent businessman who is sometimes quoted as an example of the growth of a new type of middle-class existence: the owners of gas stations. Many of them are economically independent. They own their business just like a man who owned a grocery store or the tailor who made men's suits. But what a difference between the old and the new type of independent businessman. The grocery-store owner needed a good deal of knowledge and skill. He had a choice of a number of wholesale merchants to buy from and he could pick them according to what he deemed the best prices and qualities; he had many individual customers whose needs he had to know, whom he had to advise in their buying, and with regard to whom he had to decide whether or not to give them credit. On the whole, the role of the old-fashioned businessman was not only one of independence but also one requiring skill, individualized service, knowledge, and activity. The situation of the gas-station owner, on the other hand, is entirely different. There is the one merchandise he sells; oil and gas. He is limited in his bargaining position with the oil companies. He mechanically repeats the same act of filling in gasoline and oil, again and again. There is less room for skill, initiative, individual activity, than the old-time grocery-store owner had. His profit is determined by two factors: the price he has to pay for the gasoline and oil, and the number of motorists who stop at his gas station. Both factors are largely outside of his control; he just functions as an agent between wholesaler and customer. Psychologically it makes little difference whether he is employed by the concern or whether he is an "independent" businessman; he is merely a cog in the vast machine of distribution.

As to the new middle class consisting of white-collar workers, whose numbers have grown with the expansion of big business, it is obvious that their position is very different from that of the old-type, small, independent businessman. One might argue that although they are not independent any longer in a formal sense, actually the opportunities for the development of initiative and intelligence as a basis for success are as great as or even greater than they were for the old-fashioned tailor or grocery-store owner. This is certainly true in a sense, although it may

be doubtful to what extent. But psychologically the white collar worker's situation is different. He is part of a vast economic machine, has a highly specialized task, is in fierce competition with hundreds of others who are in the same position, and is mercilessly fired if he falls behind. In short, even if his chances for success are sometimes greater, he has lost a great deal of the security and independence of the old businessman; and he has been turned into a cog, sometimes small, sometimes larger, of a machinery which forces its tempo upon him, which he cannot control and in comparison with which he is utterly insignificant.

The psychological effect of the vastness and superior power of big enterprise has also its effect on the worker. In the smaller enterprise of the old days, the worker knew his boss personally and was familiar with the whole enterprise which he was able to survey; although he was hired and fired according to the law of the market, there was some concrete relation to his boss and the business which gave him a feeling of knowing the ground on which he stood. The man in a plant which employs thousands of workers is in a different position. The boss has become an abstract figure—he never sees him; the “management” is an anonymous power with which he deals indirectly and toward which he as an individual is insignificant. The enterprise has such proportions that he cannot see beyond the small sector of it connected with his particular job.

This situation has been somewhat balanced by the trade unions. They have not only improved the economic position of the worker, but have also had the important psychological effect of giving him a feeling of strength and significance in comparison with the giants he is dealing with. Unfortunately many unions themselves have grown into mammoth organizations in which there is little room for the initiative of the individual member. He pays his dues and votes from time to time but here again he is a small cog in a large machine. It is of utmost importance that the unions become organs supported by the active co-operation of each member and of organizing them in such a way that each member may actively participate in the life of the organization and feel responsible for what is going on.

The insignificance of the individual in our era concerns not only his role as a businessman, employee, or manual laborer, but also his role as a customer. A drastic change has occurred in the role of the customer in the last decades. The customer who went into a retail store owned by an independent businessman was sure to get personal attention: his individual purchase was important to the owner of the store; he was received like somebody who mattered, his wishes were studied; the very act of buying gave him a feeling of importance and dignity. How different is the relationship of a customer to a department store. He is impressed by the

vastness of the building, the number of employees, the profusion of commodities displayed; all this makes him feel small and unimportant by comparison. As an individual he is of no importance to the department store. He is important as "a" customer; the store does not want to lose him, because this would indicate that there was something wrong and it might mean that the store would lose other customers for the same reason. As an abstract customer he is important; as a concrete customer he is utterly unimportant. There is nobody who is glad about his coming, nobody who is particularly concerned about his wishes. The act of buying has become similar to going to the post office and buying stamps.

This situation is still more emphasized by the methods of modern advertising. The sales talk of the old-fashioned businessman was essentially rational. He knew his merchandise, he knew the needs of the customer, and on the basis of this knowledge he tried to sell. To be sure, his sales talk was not entirely objective and he used persuasion as much as he could; yet, in order to be efficient, it had to be a rather rational and sensible kind of talk. A vast sector of modern advertising is different; it does not appeal to reason but to emotion; like any other kind of hypnoid suggestion, it tries to impress its objects emotionally and then make them submit intellectually. This type of advertising impresses the customer by all sorts of means: by repetition of the same formula again and again; by the influence of an authoritative image, like that of a society lady or of a famous boxer, who smokes a certain brand of cigarette; by attracting the customer and at the same time weakening his critical abilities by the sex appeal of a pretty girl; by terrorizing him with the threat of "b.o." or "halitosis"; or yet again by stimulating daydreams about a sudden change in one's whole course of life brought about by buying a certain shirt or soap. All these methods are essentially irrational; they have nothing to do with the qualities of the merchandise, and they smother and kill the critical capacities of the customer like an opiate or outright hypnosis. They give him a certain satisfaction by their daydreaming qualities just as the movies do, but at the same time they increase his feeling of smallness and powerlessness.

As a matter of fact, these methods of dulling the capacity for critical thinking are more dangerous to our democracy than many of the open attacks against it, and more immoral—in terms of human integrity—than the indecent literature, publication of which we punish. The consumer movement has attempted to restore the customer's critical ability, dignity, and sense of significance, and thus operates in a direction similar to the trade-union movement. So far, however, its scope has not grown beyond modest beginnings.

What holds true in the economic sphere is also true in the political

sphere. In the early days of democracy there were various kinds of arrangements in which the individual would concretely and actively participate in voting for a certain decision or for a certain candidate for office. The questions to be decided were familiar to him, as were the candidates; the act of voting, often done in a meeting of the whole population of a town, had a quality of concreteness in which the individual really counted. Today the voter is confronted by mammoth parties which are just as distant and as impressive as the mammoth organizations of industry. The issues are complicated and made still more so by all sorts of methods to befog them. The voter may see something of his candidate around election time; but since the days of the radio, he is not likely to see him so often, thus losing one of the last means of sizing up "his" candidate. Actually he is offered a choice between two or three candidates by the party machines; but these candidates are not of "his" choosing, he and they know little of each other, and their relationship is as abstract as most other relationships have become.

Like the effect of advertising upon the customer, the methods of political propaganda tend to increase the feeling of insignificance of the individual voter. Repetition of slogans and emphasis on factors which have nothing to do with the issue at stake numb his critical capacities. The clear and rational appeal to his thinking are rather the exception than the rule in political propaganda—even in democratic countries. Confronted with the power and size of the parties as demonstrated in their propaganda, the individual voter cannot help feeling small and of little significance.

All this does not mean that advertising and political propaganda overtly stress the individual's insignificance. Quite the contrary; they flatter the individual by making him appear important, and by pretending that they appeal to his critical judgment, to his sense of discrimination. But these pretenses are essentially a method to dull the individual's suspicions and to help him fool himself as to the individual character of his decision. I need scarcely point out that the propaganda of which I have been speaking is not wholly irrational, and that there are differences in the weight of rational factors in the propaganda of different parties and candidates respectively.

Other factors have added to the growing powerlessness of the individual. The economic and political scene is more complex and vaster than it used to be; the individual has less ability to look through it. The threats which he is confronted with have grown in dimensions too. A structural unemployment of many millions has increased the sense of insecurity. Although the support of the unemployed by public means has done much to counteract the results of unemployment, not only economically but also psychologically, the fact remains that for the vast majority of people the

burden of being unemployed is very hard to bear psychologically and the dread of it overshadows their whole life. To have a job—regardless of what kind of a job it is—seems to many all they could want of life and something they should be grateful for. Unemployment has also increased the threat of old age. In many jobs only the young and even inexperienced person who is still adaptable is wanted; that means, those who can still be molded without difficulty into the little cogs which are required in that particular setup.

The threat of war has also added to the feeling of individual powerlessness. To be sure, there were wars in the nineteenth century too. But since the last war the possibilities of destruction have increased so tremendously—the range of people to be affected by war has grown to such an extent as to comprise everybody without any exception—that the threat of war has become a nightmare which, though it may not be conscious to many people before their nation is actually involved in the war, has overshadowed their lives and increased their feeling of fright and individual powerlessness.

The “style” of the whole period corresponds to the picture I have sketched. Vastness of cities in which the individual is lost, buildings that are as high as mountains, constant acoustic bombardment by the radio, big headlines changing three times a day and leaving one no choice to decide what is important, shows in which one hundred girls demonstrate their ability with clocklike precision to eliminate the individual and act like a powerful though smooth machine, the beating rhythm of jazz—these and many other details are expressions of a constellation in which the individual is confronted by uncontrollable dimensions in comparison with which he is a small particle. All he can do is to fall in step like a marching soldier or a worker on the endless belt. He can act; but the sense of independence, significance, has gone.

The extent to which the average person in America is filled with the same sense of fear and insignificance seems to find a telling expression in the fact of the popularity of the Mickey Mouse pictures. There the one theme—in so many variations—is always this: something little is persecuted and endangered by something overwhelmingly strong, which threatens to kill or swallow the little thing. The little thing runs away and eventually succeeds in escaping or even in harming the enemy. People would not be ready to look continually at the many variations of this one theme unless it touched upon something very close to their own emotional life. Apparently the little thing threatened by a powerful, hostile enemy is the spectator himself; that is how he feels and that is the situation with which he can identify himself. But of course, unless there

were a happy ending there would be no continuous attraction. As it is, the spectator lives through all his own fears and feelings of smallness and at the end gets the comforting feeling that, in spite of all, he will be saved and will even conquer the strong one. However—and this is the significant and sad part of this “happy end”—his salvation lies mostly in his ability to run away and in the unforeseen accidents which make it impossible for the monster to catch him.

The position in which the individual finds himself in our period had already been foreseen by visionary thinkers in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard describes the helpless individual torn and tormented by doubts, overwhelmed by the feeling of aloneness and insignificance. Nietzsche visualizes the approaching nihilism which was to become manifest in Nazism and paints a picture of a “superman” as the negation of the insignificant, directionless individual he saw in reality. The theme of the powerlessness of man has found a most precise expression in Franz Kafka's work. In his *Castle* he describes the man who wants to get in touch with the mysterious inhabitants of a castle, who are supposed to tell him what to do and show him his place in the world. All his life consists in his frantic effort to get into touch with them, but he never succeeds and is left alone with a sense of utter futility and helplessness.

The feeling of isolation and powerlessness has been beautifully expressed in the following passage by Julian Green: “I knew that we counted little in comparison with the universe, I knew that we were nothing; but to be so immeasurably nothing seems in some way both to overwhelm and at the same time to reassure. Those figures, those dimensions beyond the range of human thought, are utterly overpowering. Is there anything whatsoever to which we can cling? Amid that chaos of illusions into which we are cast headlong, there is one thing that stands out as true, and that is—love. All the rest is nothingness, an empty void. We peer down into a huge dark abyss. And we are afraid.”<sup>5</sup>

However, this feeling of individual isolation and powerlessness as it has been expressed by these writers and as it is felt by many so-called neurotic people, is nothing the average normal person is aware of. It is too frightening for that. It is covered over by the daily routine of his activities, by the assurance and approval he finds in his private or social relations, by success in business, by any number of distractions, by “having fun,” “making contacts,” “going places.” But whistling in the dark does not bring light. Aloneness, fear, and bewilderment remain; people cannot stand it for ever. They cannot go on bearing the burden of

<sup>5</sup> Julian Green, *Personal Record, 1928-1939*, translated by J. Godefroi, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1939.

“freedom from”; they must try to escape from freedom altogether unless they can progress from negative to positive freedom. The principal social avenues of escape in our time are the submission to a leader, as has happened in Fascist countries, and the compulsive conforming as is prevalent in our own democracy. . . .



SIDNEY HOOK

## Heresy and Conspiracy\*

THE "HOT WAR" in Korea makes it even more urgent that we clarify our thinking on the "cold war" of ideologies. At the heart of the matter are basic philosophical issues which in more settled times would have been dismissed as of no practical concern. One of them is the meaning of "liberalism." Subject of innumerable conferences, books and articles, it is also a recurrent theme of court decisions and even some current state papers.

Judging by public discussion, there are few Americans who do not regard themselves as "liberals." Legislation is often defended or criticized not in terms of its reasonable anticipated consequences but because it seems to be in accordance with, or opposed to, the "principles" of liberalism. Sometimes those who profess liberalism will line up on opposite sides of the fence in respect to an identical legislative measure, even when they agree on the facts of the case. This suggests, that like all large words in human affairs—for example, "freedom," "love" and "experience"—the term "liberalism" is multiply ambiguous. In different periods, liberalism has meant different things, especially when it became the fighting slogan of particular groups with a special program. But there is a certain nucleus of meaning which has remained an historical constant in all movements that have called themselves liberal despite their differences on specific issues, and which is reflected in common usage. In this sense, no party has a monopoly of the term. Liberal men and ideas may sometimes be found in quarters that bear other labels.

What makes analysis of the meaning of liberalism more than an academic exercise is the challenge of the Communist movement, which invokes the freedoms that prevail in a liberal society in order to destroy it.

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\* From *Heresy, Yes—Conspiracy, No*, by Sidney Hook, Chapter 1, pp. 17-36. The John Day Co., 1953. Reprinted by permission of the author. References to other parts of the book remain in this extract.

Many proposals have been made to cope with this problem. All of them must face the question of whether, in advocating such measures, the principles of liberalism are themselves being consistently applied or compromised.

It is easier to say what liberalism is not than what it is. It is not identical with the belief in *laissez faire* or free enterprise in economics. For it is found among thinkers who anteceded the rise of capitalism. The temper of Great Britain has remained liberal despite the shifting economic programs and institutions of the last century, which have ranged from an unregulated private profit economy and great extremes in wealth and income to a moderate socialism and moderate differences in standards of life. Those who regard themselves as liberals today recognize that property is a form of power, and, like all power of man over man, must be responsible, and therefore limited. There is no agreement among liberals about the precise form social control must take. But in contradiction to some of their historical ancestors, they no longer regard all government action to further social welfare as unmitigated evil.

Nor is liberalism the philosophy of invariable compromise, nor the comforting notion that it is always possible to find a middle ground. No liberal who understands the nature of Fascism can say: "I am neither a Fascist nor an anti-Fascist." Neither can he say, if he understands the nature of communism, what Thomas Mann has repeatedly said: "I am neither a Communist nor an anti-Communist." Although prepared, even eager, to negotiate the conflict of legitimate claims even when they are extreme, in order to avoid civil strife, he knows that not all claims are legitimate and that some causes cannot be compromised. If a man demands my purse, to grant him half of it is not a liberal solution. Were the U.S.S.R. to demand the cession of Alaska on the ground that the Tsar had no authority to sell it, it would not necessarily be a liberal policy to settle for half the territory.

From this it follows that although liberalism is naturally pacific, it is not pacifist. It does not make a fetish of "sweet reasonableness" in the face of aggression, and it is aware that appeasement may be a greater provocation to armed conflict than a judicious show of force as an index of ability to resist. The history of Allied relations with Hitler is indisputable evidence on this point.

Finally, liberalism cannot be identified with the traditional belief in specific, absolute or inalienable rights, since every such right is in fact evaluated in terms of its consequences for society and is therefore subject to modification. One right limits another, and the final adjudication of the conflict of rights is made in the reflective light of the total situation, or of that set of rationally preferred freedoms whose existence may entail the

temporary abridgement of any one freedom. To say that we cannot preserve our freedoms by sacrificing them is an empty piece of rhetoric, because a *particular* freedom must sometimes be sacrificed to preserve other freedoms.

The most comprehensive and adequate definition in positive terms of the meaning of liberalism, from Socrates to John Dewey, is suggested by the memorable words of Justice Holmes. It is the belief "in the free trade of ideas—that the test of truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market." This is not a program of action nor a philosophical theory of truth, but an attitude or temper of mind towards all programs. Liberals may disagree among themselves about everything else; but all of them have this faith in common. It is a faith which marks off liberal from totalitarian culture. Any action which restricts the freedom of ideas to develop or circulate is illiberal.

There are at least two presuppositions of this belief in the free market of ideas. One of them is explicitly drawn by Justice Holmes and already recognized by Jefferson; the other is implicit and perhaps more important, for around it center most of our present difficulties.

The first is that the free expression and circulation of ideas may be checked wherever their likely effects constitute a clear and present danger to public peace or the security of the country. This is a specific application of the principle that no right is absolute when it endangers rights of equal or greater validity. In ordinary affairs, this is a commonplace. The right to inquire is innocent, but not when it leads someone to experiment on a human being to determine how long he can survive torture. The right to free speech is precious, but not when it blasts a reputation by libelous accusation. Truth is sacred, but a person who revealed it knowing that it would be used to destroy his country is a traitor. Freedom to worship God according to one's conscience is one of the historical cornerstones of the structure of American liberties, but it cannot be invoked to protect rituals which require human sacrifice or practices like plural marriages or refusal to submit to vaccination against plagues.

In the context of public affairs, however, there is a certain ambiguity involved in the conception of clear and present danger. Clear to whom? To the public enforcement agencies, to Congress, to the Justices of the Supreme Court (who are notoriously at odds with each other and who, on matters of fact, are less well informed than many laymen)? And how present must a "present danger" be? Must a riot be in progress before an anti-Semitic orator ranting about the forged *Protocols of Zion* is stopped from speaking? Must we await the actual delivery of an atomic bomb by a foreign power, or a formal declaration of war, before the incitements

to treason by its fifth columnists in this country are curbed? These are some of the difficulties that attend the clear and present danger formula. They cannot be solved by fiat. In all such questions of "proximity and degree," good judgment is required. The most we can expect is that those who make the judgment will be competently and ultimately responsible to the community at large. According to our practice, a clear and present danger exists in the United States when a majority of the Supreme Court says it does; in England, when Parliament says it does.

The second presupposition of the liberal's faith in the free market of ideas is that the competition will be honestly and openly conducted. For unless there are certain rules, so to speak, of honest competition, analogous to those which hold in other domains of testing and inquiry, freedom of choice is an illusion. If the market is rigged by money, power or fraud, what gets accepted is anything but the truth. If ability to withstand honest competition is not a sufficient condition of truth it is at least a necessary one. From the point of view of the liberal, it is not doctrines "fraught with death" which he fears, for his faith in intelligence is such that he is confident that in the open and honest exchange of opinion the majority of men will choose life, not death, and that if they choose death they deserve their fate. Men cannot be compelled to remain free, any more than they can be compelled to love one another. What the liberal fears is the systematic corruption of the free market of ideas by activities which make intelligent choice impossible. In short, what he fears is not heresy but conspiracy.

The failure to recognize the distinction between heresy and conspiracy is fatal to a liberal civilization, for the inescapable consequence of their identification is either self-destruction, when heresies are punished as conspiracies, or destruction at the hands of their enemies, when conspiracies are tolerated as heresies.

A heresy is a set of unpopular ideas or opinions on matters of grave concern to the community. The right to profess publicly a heresy of any character, on any theme, is an essential element of a liberal society. The liberal stands ready to defend the honest heretic no matter what his views against any attempt to curb him. It is enough that the heretic pays the price of unpopularity which he cannot avoid. In some respects each of us is a heretic, but a liberal society can impose no official orthodoxies of *belief*, disagreement with which entails loss of liberty or life.

A conspiracy, as distinct from a heresy, is a secret or underground movement which seeks to attain its ends not by normal political or educational processes but by playing outside the rules of the game. Because it undermines the conditions which are required in order that doctrines may freely compete for acceptance, because where successful it ruthlessly

destroys all heretics and dissenters, a conspiracy cannot be tolerated without self-stultification in a liberal society.

A heresy does not shrink from publicity. It welcomes it. Not so a conspiracy. The signs of a conspiracy are secrecy, anonymity, the use of false names and labels, and the calculated lie. It does not offer its wares openly but by systematic infiltration into all organizations of cultural life, it seeks to capture strategic posts to carry out a policy alien to the purposes of the organization. There is political conspiracy, which is the concern of the state; but there may also be a conspiracy against a labor union, a cultural or professional association, or an educational institution which is not primarily the concern of the state but of its own members. In general, whoever subverts the rules of a democratic organization and seeks to win by chicanery what cannot be fairly won in the process of free discussion is a conspirator.

Communist *ideas* are heresies, and liberals need have no fear of them where they are freely and openly expressed. They should be studied and evaluated in the light of all the relevant evidence. No one should be punished because he holds them. The Communist *movement*, however, is something quite different from a mere heresy, for wherever it exists it operates along the lines laid down by Lenin as guides to Communists of all countries, and perfected in great detail since then.

It is necessary [so Lenin instructs all Communists] . . . to agree to any and every sacrifice and even—if need be—resort to all sorts of stratagems, manœuvres, and illegal methods, to evasions and subterfuges . . . in order to carry on Communist work in them [trade unions] at all costs.—*Selected Works*, English translation, Vol. X, p. 95.

Further:

In all organizations without exception . . . (political, industrial, military, cooperative, educational, sports), groups or nuclei of Communists should be formed . . . mainly open groups but also secret groups.—*Op. cit.*, p. 169.

There are no exceptions:

In all countries, even the freest, "legal" and "peaceful" in the sense that the class struggle is least acute in them, the time has fully matured when it is absolutely necessary for every Communist Party systematically to combine legal with illegal work, legal and illegal organizations. . . . Illegal work is particularly necessary in the army, the navy, and police.—pp. 172-3.

Under present conditions of political and military warfare, it is not hard to see what immense dangers to the security of liberal institutions is implicit in this strategy of infiltration and deceit. Even a few men in sensitive posts can do incalculable harm. These instructions—and there are

many more detailed ones, combined with explicit directives to Communists to transform any war in which their country is involved, except one approved by the Soviet Union, into a civil war against their own government—indicate that members of the Communist party are not so much heretics as conspirators and in actual practice regard themselves as such.

These may be some justification for conspiratorial activity in undemocratic countries where heresies are proscribed, but Lenin, as we have seen, makes no exceptions. Since 1917, he maintains, in no country of the world can the revolution be peacefully achieved. "Today, both in England and America, the 'essential' thing for 'every real people's revolution' is the *smashing*, the *destruction* of the 'ready-made state machinery'..." (*Op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 37, italics in original.)

How faithfully the Communist movement pursues the pattern laid down by its authoritative leaders in the political sphere is a matter of historical record. But unfortunately for the peace of mind of liberals, the same tactics are followed in other areas of social and cultural life. The history of American labor is replete with illustrations.

Every large labor organization in the United States has been compelled to take administrative action against Communist party elements not because of their beliefs—their heresies—but because their pattern of conduct made the Communist party, and ultimately the Kremlin, the decisive power in the life of the union, and not the needs and wishes of the membership. President Philip Murray of the CIO exposed the technique in detail when his organization ousted the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union. In all these situations, it is not fear of Communist ideas which has led to disciplinary action. The charge against the Communists is that it is *they* who fear the open and honest confrontation of ideas. They operate through "fronts," the charge continues, because they fear that, given a free choice of honestly labeled alternatives, they will be rejected; once they slip into power, they consolidate their position by terror.

Under existing law punishment is provided for criminal conspiracy, whether this be conspiracy in restraint of trade or conspiracy to overthrow the government by insurrection or to advocate such overthrow in time of clear and present danger. But there are noncriminal conspiracies in sectors of life which are not affected by legislative power. These sectors of life are social and cultural and are regulated by tradition, common standards of propriety or decency in personal relations, and sometimes by explicit rules. The transfer of some of the techniques by which conspirators in the past have seized the state to capturing control of benevolent associations, social, chess, and athletic clubs, literary societies, research groups, professional and trade unions, even philanthropic agencies is unique to

modern totalitarian movements. In the past, it was here if anywhere, that honest opposition openly declared itself. The elaborate devices adopted by Communists to disguise the nature of their opposition and to prevent others from functioning in opposition to them when they seize control may have been anticipated in earlier times by other groups but they never were previously employed with such fanaticism, rationalized by such body of doctrine, and executed with such lack of scruple.

By now it should be apparent that liberals in the twentieth century are confronted by a situation quite unfamiliar to their forebears. For they must contend not with fearless heretics, indigenous elements of the community who, like the abolitionists and revolutionists of old, scorn concealment, and who make no bones about their hostility to the principles of liberalism. They find themselves in the unique historical predicament of having to deal with native elements who, by secrecy and stratagem, serve the interests of a foreign power which believes itself entitled to speak for all mankind, and whose victory spells the end of all liberal civilization and with it the right to heresy. It is now plain that the Communist regimes of the world have turned out to be the greatest and cruelest heresy-hunters in history, not merely in politics but in every branch of theory and practice. They have even abolished the right to be silent, for on any matter on which the Central Committee of any Communist party has laid down the law, silence is construed as treason.

It is a great pity and a source of much confusion that present-day Communists are often referred to as Marxists, without further qualification. For this overlooks the radical departure from Marx's own position initiated by Lenin and Stalin on the question of conspiracy. Marx was an unconcealed heretic. Even when writing in nondemocratic countries, subject to repression and imprisonment, he scorned the use of conspiratorial techniques and excoriated Bakunin and others for adopting them. The concluding sentence of the *Communist Manifesto* frankly tells the rulers of the nondemocratic countries of Europe: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."

Contrast with this the instructions given to Communists by the Kremlin in democratic countries, to adopt para-military organizational forms, to work underground even when legal work is permitted, and to develop systematic techniques of deception, and we can see the difference between honest and open revolutionists and underground conspirators.

The problems which underground conspiracy creates for a liberal society are of tremendous magnitude. They cannot be dismissed by a quotation from Jefferson. Nor can they be solved by indiscriminately placing the Communist movement and its entire periphery outside the

law by special legislation. They require constructive intelligence, the discovery and application of techniques in each field which will meet conspiratorial threats to the proper functioning of liberal institutions without creating still greater ones. Legal outlawry of the Communist Party will not prevent it from reappearing under different names.

Failure to take this approach is characteristic of some current wholesale responses to the problem. The first is that of frightened reactionaries who cannot distinguish between heresy and conspiracy, and identify communism with any decent thing they wish to destroy. By making reckless charges of conspiracy where there is only honest heresy, they prevent intelligent choice. And by labeling all progressive ideas as Communist heresies, they help Communist strategy. For the Communist strategy is to make it appear that Communists are an integral part of the indigenous progressive movement, instead of a cancerous growth upon it, and that any legitimate measures directed against them is actually an attack upon all progressives, and indeed upon the philosophy of liberalism itself. There is nothing new about this unreasoning reaction. It emanates from the same quarters which called the Taft-Ellender Housing Bill "Communist," and plans for national health insurance "un-American."

A second response is made by a small but influential group of men who believe that they can check Communist conspiracy merely by passing laws against it, and that they can protect institutions from subversives by requiring all individuals, particularly teachers, to take loyalty oaths. As if any member of the Communist party regarded any oaths except one to the Communist party and the Soviet Union as binding! This results in foolish legislation like the Feinberg Law in New York and the Ober Law in Maryland, which are potentially dangerous in that they fail to make proper distinctions between conspirators and heretics.

A third group consists of those whom we may call ritualistic, as distinct from realistic, liberals. They ignore or blithely dismiss as comparatively insignificant the mass of evidence concerning the conspiratorial character of the Communist movement in all institutions in which it is active. They regard communism merely as an unpleasant heresy just a little worse than a crotchety theory of disease or finance. They sometimes characterize prosecution of a conspirator for espionage or perjury as persecution of a heretic. Or they condemn as "witch hunting," measures taken to deny access to sensitive posts in government or social institutions to members of the Communist party, who are under explicit instructions to sabotage the purposes of these organizations. The ritualistic liberals would wait until the sabotage has been carried out before proceeding against Communists. This gives a new lease of life to the reactionaries, who now tend to regard the ritualistic liberals as the dupes or accomplices of the Communists,



thus confirming the illusions of the ritualistic liberals that there really is no problem of Communist conspiracy.

One of the most ambiguous phrases in current use among ritualistic liberals is "guilt by association." I shall analyze the meaning of this phrase at length in Chapter IV. A few preliminary observations are sufficient here.

American tradition is opposed to the doctrine of *legal* guilt by association. But common sense has always recognized that there may be moral guilt by continuous association with disreputable persons, as when a city official is condemned because the intimate cronies with whom he "associates" may be gangsters or racketeers. Sometimes a man's fitness for a post of trust is determined by his associations. It all depends upon the specific character of the associations.

Professor Arthur Lovejoy has pointed out in a brilliant note that the very term "association" is highly equivocal and is systematically employed to blur the truth about Communists. It covers innocent social gatherings and chance contacts as well as active collaboration. "One may 'associate' with Communist Party members (as I myself have done)," he writes, "in the hope of convincing them of their errors."

Those who argue that to judge a man by his membership in the Communist Party is to judge him "guilty by association" overlook the verifiable fact that membership in the Communist Party is rigorously controlled by an iron-clad discipline which excludes those who are inactive or in disagreement with the line of the party on *any* question. They seem unaware of the existence in the Communist Party of a "Control Commission" whose task, among other things, is to check up on the activities of members and expel those who disobey instructions. Before the practice became dangerous to the Communist Party, the Central Control Commission actually published the lists of members dropped for violations of party discipline. This is frankly admitted by leaders of the American Communist Party, as in the following colloquy a few years ago between Earl Browder and members of the House Committee on Un-American Activities:

*Mr. Mathews:* In numerous instances we have a notation [of the Central Control Commission] that the expelled member "refused to carry out decisions." That is in line with your explanation of the relationship between the Communist Party of United States and the Comintern?

*Mr. Browder:* Exactly.

*Mr. Mathews:* A member must carry out all decisions of the party or be expelled from the party?

*The Chairman:* Is that correct?

*Mr. Browder:* Yes, that is correct.

*Mr. Starnes:* A party member does not have any latitude or discretion in the matter—he has to carry out orders?

*Mr. Browder:* The party [member] has to carry out orders. (Hearings before Special Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, 76th Congress, First Session on H.Res. 282, Vol. 7, p. 4417.)

The Central (or National) Control Commission of the Communist Party still exists. This was dramatically revealed in the fall of 1952 at a public session of a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Internal Security at which a professor of Brooklyn College testified to his former connections and the methods of blackmail used to prevent him from leaving the Communist Party. Among those present was an individual, one Konstantin Radzie, recognized by committee investigators as a functionary of the Communist Party. When explicitly asked whether he was a member of the Control Commission of the Communist Party, he refused to reply on the ground that his answer would be self-incriminating and pleaded the privileges of protection under the Fifth Amendment. (Cf. *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1952.) Subsequently Mr. Radzie was identified publicly by John Lautner, formerly a member of the National Control Commission and Chairman of the New York State Control Commission of the Communist Party, as a member of the National Control Commission. Documentary evidence that Mr. Radzie's membership was of long standing was introduced in the form of a photostatic copy of the *Daily Worker* of March 11, 1929, announcing the selection of K. Radzie to the Central Control Commission by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party.\*

Very few individuals who have discussed the issues posed by the existence of the Communist movement have paid proper attention to the existence of the mechanisms of control by which the Communist parties in all countries purge their ranks of the inactive, the doubtful, the half-hearted, or the critical—in short of all whose conformity is less than total. Still fewer have grasped the significance of these controls and the empirical evidence they offer that membership in the Communist Party is something earned only by good behavior as tested by rigorous standards set by a group which is professionally and doctrinally suspicious. If a man has been a member of the Communist Party over a period of time one can bet one's bottom dollar that he has carried out his major instructions and duties of membership to the satisfaction of his Communist superiors. Otherwise he would be outside of the party.

It is or should be now clear that "association" by way of membership

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\* *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary of the U. S. Senate*, October 13, 1952, pp. 248-9.

in the Communist Party is not innocent or coincidental but is a *form of active co-operation and collaboration* in carrying out the purposes of a conspiratorial organization. The Communist Party sees to it that all members are instructed about the purposes as soon as they join. Continued membership is possible only in virtue of a series of continued *acts* of obedience to instructions. Those who dub the active co-operation required of all members of the Communist Party "guilt by association" coyly suggest by that phrase the innocuous associations of chance or occasional encounters with Communists in social gatherings. They simply ignore the fact that all members of the Communist Party must "associate" by active co-operation with its purposes or be expelled.

Ritualistic liberals legitimately criticize the dangerous nonsense of those who proscribe heresy. But they carry their criticism to a point where they give the impression that the country is in the grip of a deadly reign of terror or hysteria much more dangerous than Communist expansion from without and infiltration from within. Because someone has given a silly characterization of a subversive organization, they imply that there are no subversive organizations. The sad history of recent American liberal movements, however, shows that the instructions given to American Communists by Otto Kuusinen, as Secretary of the Communist International, bore bitter fruit for liberals. Kuusinen advised: "We must create a whole solar system of organizations and smaller committees around the Communist Party, so to speak, smaller organizations working under the influence of the Party." (*American Communist*, May 1931.)

The problem of membership in Communist front organizations which often conceal their purposes is much more difficult. Many innocent people have been ensnared by these organizations. No hard and fast rule can be laid down as a guide. The number of such organizations an individual has joined, the time he joined, his function and activities upon joining—all these, as we shall see, are highly relevant in determining the degree to which an individual is untrustworthy from the point of view of security. Only those exceptional souls who have never made a mistake or have never been fooled can shut the gates of understanding and charity against all members of such groups and pronounce a blanket judgment against them. This troublesome question should not be made a matter of legislation but of judicious administration.

Because some security regulations in government are questionable, and because some blunders have been made, ritualistic liberals intimate that no security regulations are necessary and that the existing laws against treason and criminal conspiracy are sufficient for all purposes. They do not understand that the purpose of the security program is not punishment for acts committed but prevention of acts threatened by those who are

under instructions to commit them or whose behavior or habits make them dangerous risks. By artfully collecting instances of foolishness from the press and blowing up their significance, they convey a very misleading picture comparable to what an account of American business would be like if only bankruptcies were reported, or an account of public order that featured only crime stories.

David Lilienthal, a realistic not a ritualistic liberal, has warned us against the "Scare-the-dopes!" method of discussing nuclear energy. There is also a "Scare-the-dopes!" method of discussion of the problem of Communistic conspiracy. It is used by those who employ the term Communist with scandalous looseness as a synonym for any economic or political heresy, and who shout conspiracy where there is only heresy. It is also used by those who do not tell us how to meet the real dangers of Communist conspiracy but shout "Hysteria!" "Fascism!" or "Police State!" when the first faltering efforts are made to cope with dangers hitherto unprecedented in the history of American democracy.

The position of realistic liberalism in three troubled centers of American life in which overt conspiratorial activity of a criminal nature is not involved may be briefly indicated as illustrative of its attitude.

Where government service is concerned, the operating maxim for every sensitive and policy-making post should be a principle enunciated by Roger Baldwin, former head of the American Civil Liberties Union: "A superior loyalty to a foreign government disqualifies a citizen for service to our own." This is not a matter of civil rights but of common sense. Once a policy is adopted by the governing agencies of a liberal society empowered by a democratic consensus to safeguard the public welfare, it is not only its right but its duty to insure its loyal execution. It cannot wait for a major piece of sabotage or leak of information in order to act. Yet this is precisely the procedure advocated by those who urge that once an individual has been appointed and served a probationary period, he should be dismissed only if he is caught engaging in espionage or sabotage. Presumably, even if it had been known that Hiss, Fuchs, Boyer, et al. were members of the Communist Party, once employed they should not have been dismissed until they had carried out their objectives or were on the verge of doing so.

The difficulty lies in determining what constitutes sufficient evidence to warrant the inference that a particular individual is unsafe, for in some cases even past membership in subversive organizations is not conclusive. On the other hand, notoriously bad judgment might bar someone from an important post whose loyalty is not impugned. A fool may sometimes be as dangerous as a rogue. Nor can the principles that apply in a courtroom in determination of *criminal* guilt be applied in these situations. The criteria

for establishing "unreliability" must obviously be less stringent than those which lead us to deprive an individual of his life or freedom.

It is not impossible to find knowledgeable individuals who can supervise such a program. Where certain procedural safeguards are adopted and individuals allowed in doubtful cases to resign quietly without prejudice when they do not wish to accept posts in nonsensitive sectors, the likelihood of injustice diminishes. The more fanfare and publicity, however, the greater are the chances of error and injury to reputation. Ritualistic liberals who insist that everything be decided in the public eye, and that a case be made out that can stick in a court of law before an individual is dropped as a security risk, are inviting political circuses and a reaction that will sweep away all administrative safeguards against arbitrary dismissal. It cannot be emphasized too often that there is a difference between legal rules of evidence absolutely essential to our tradition where a man's life or liberty is at stake and rules of evidence that bear only on an individual's qualifications for a position of trust. There is certainly room for criticism of present procedures, but whoever speaks up will be more persuasive if he presents alternative positive proposals which show that he at least recognizes the problem.

In labor organizations, the existence of Communist leaders is extremely dangerous because of their unflinching use of the strike as a political instrument at the behest of the Kremlin. The history of Communist-led trade unions here and abroad is instructive enough. The most effective way of meeting this situation, however, is not by requiring non-Communist oaths on the part of union officers; for this can be circumvented by delegating office to individuals who are faithful but non-cardholding Communists. The most intelligent procedure for labor here is to let labor clean its own house. Free and independent trade unions, which are essential to a democracy, cannot be liberated from the organizational stranglehold of the Communist Party by government intervention. Only an aroused membership together with other labor organizations can do the job.

The question of freedom and responsibility in the schools will be discussed at length further along in this book. But in a preliminary way I wish to point out that the question is not primarily political. It does not involve civil rights so much as the ethics of professional conduct. Heresy in the schools—whether in science, economics, or politics—must be protected against any agency which seeks to impose orthodoxy. For the scholar there is no subversive doctrine, but only that which is valid or invalid or not proven in the light of evidence. The primary commitment of the teacher is to ethics and logic of inquiry. It is not his beliefs, right or wrong—it is not his heresies—which disqualify the Communist party

teacher, but his declaration of intention, as evidenced by official statements, to practice educational fraud. Must one catch him in the act before dismissing him? Not necessarily; any more than we must catch a judge who is a *present* and *active* member of the Ku Klux Klan in the act of discriminating against Negroes or Jews before concluding he is unfit for judicial office. It is amazing to hear from ritualistic liberals that it is a violation of academic freedom to prevent a man from carrying out the professional misconduct which he has pledged himself to engage in by virtue of his membership in an organization whose publicly professed aim is to indoctrinate for the Communist Party in classrooms, enroll students in Communist Youth organizations, rewrite textbooks from the Communist point of view, build cells on campuses, capture departments, and inculcate the Communist Party line that in case of war students should turn their arms against their own government.

This is a matter of ethical hygiene, not of political heresy or of persecution. And because it is, the enforcement of the proper professional standards should rest with the teachers themselves, and not with the state or regents or even boards of trustees. The actual techniques of handling such issues must be worked out, but the problem cannot be confused with the issue of heresy. If the conspiratorial purposes of Communist Party teachers is glossed over by ritualistic liberals as merely a manifestation of heresy, then all heresy comes under fire. This does not mean that faculties must engage in a hue and cry to rout out the few unfaithful members of the profession who are betraying their trust. But they must not refuse to act whenever evidence of such unfitness is established thus making clear that "not everything gives." What this involves will be spelled out in greater detail in Part II.

Liberalism in the twentieth century must toughen its fibre, for it is engaged in a fight on many different fronts. It must defend the free market in ideas against the racists, the professional patrioteers, and those spokesmen of the status quo who would freeze the existing inequalities of opportunity and economic power by choking off criticism. It must also be defended against those agents and apologists of Communist totalitarianism who, instead of honestly defending their heresies, resort to conspiratorial methods of anonymity and other techniques of fifth columnists. It will not be taken in by labels like "left" and "right." These terms came into use after the French Revolution, but the legacy of the men who then called themselves "left"—the strategic freedoms of the Bill of Rights—is today everywhere repudiated by those who are euphemistically referred to as "leftists" but who are actually Communists more reactionary than many of those who are conventionally called "rightists."

There is always a danger of excesses being committed when exposure

of Communist conspiracy is left to the leadership of reactionaries. When this happens, it testifies to the fact that the liberals have failed to do the necessary job of moral education which is implicit in their dedication to the "free market in ideas." Similarly, they lose by default when, instead of taking the leadership in the struggle against "Know-Nothingism," racial persecution, and cultural repression, they permit Communists to exploit for their own political purposes the idealism of youth and the just resentments of the underprivileged.

Realistic liberalism recognizes that to survive we must solve many hard problems, and that they can be solved only by intelligence, and not by pious rhetoric. Our greatest danger is not fear of ideas but *absence* of ideas—specific ideas, addressed to concrete problems, here and now, problems of such complexity that only the ignorant can claim to know all the answers to them.

Finally, liberalism today conceives life not in terms of bare survival or of peace at any price, but in the light of ideas and ideals without which a life worthy of man cannot be attained. Among them are the strategic freedoms of those American traditions which make the continuous use of intelligence possible. . . .

JOHN DEWEY

## Religion versus the Religious\*

NEVER BEFORE in history has mankind been so much of two minds, so divided into two camps, as it is today. Religions have traditionally been allied with ideas of the supernatural, and often have been based upon explicit beliefs about it. Today there are many who hold that nothing worthy of being called religious is possible apart from the supernatural. Those who hold this belief differ in many respects. They range from those who accept the dogmas and sacraments of the Greek and Roman Catholic church as the only sure means of access to the supernatural to the theist or mild deist. Between them are the many Protestant denominations who think the Scriptures, aided by a pure conscience, are adequate avenues to supernatural truth and power. But they agree in one point: the necessity for a Supernatural Being and for an immortality that is beyond the power of nature.

The opposed group consists of those who think the advance of culture and science has completely discredited the supernatural and with it all religions that were allied with belief in it. But they go beyond this point. The extremists in this group believe that with elimination of the supernatural not only must historic religions be dismissed but with them everything of a religious nature. When historical knowledge has discredited the claims made for the supernatural character of the persons said to have founded historic religions; when the supernatural inspiration attributed to literatures held sacred has been riddled, and when anthropological and psychological knowledge has disclosed the all-too-human source from which religious beliefs and practices have sprung, everything religious must, they say, also go.

There is one idea held in common by these two opposite groups:

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\* From *A Common Faith*, by John Dewey, Chapter I, pp. 1-28. Yale University Press. Reprinted by permission.



identification of the religious with the supernatural. The question I shall raise in these chapters concerns the ground for and the consequences of this identification: its reasons and its value. In the discussion I shall develop another conception of the nature of the religious phase of experience, one that separates it from the supernatural and the things that have grown up about it. I shall try to show that these derivations are encumbrances and that what is genuinely religious will undergo an emancipation when it is relieved from them; that then, for the first time, the religious aspect of experience will be free to develop freely on its own account.

This view is exposed to attack from both the other camps. It goes contrary to traditional religions, including those that have the greatest hold upon the religiously minded today. The view announced will seem to them to cut the vital nerve of the religious element itself in taking away the basis upon which traditional religions and institutions have been founded. From the other side, the position I am taking seems like a timid halfway position, a concession and compromise unworthy of thought that is thoroughgoing. It is regarded as a view entertained from mere tender-mindedness, as an emotional hangover from childhood indoctrination, or even as a manifestation of a desire to avoid disapproval and curry favor.

The heart of my point, as far as I shall develop it in this first section, is that there is a difference between religion, *a* religion, and the religious; between anything that may be denoted by a noun substantive and the quality of experience that is designated by an adjective. It is not easy to find a definition of religion in the substantive sense that wins general acceptance. However, in the *Oxford Dictionary* I find the following: "Recognition on the part of man of some unseen higher power as having control of his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship."

This particular definition is less explicit in assertion of the supernatural character of the higher unseen power than are others that might be cited. It is, however, surcharged with implications having their source in ideas connected with the belief in the supernatural, characteristic of historic religions. Let us suppose that one familiar with the history of religions, including those called primitive, compares the definition with the variety of known facts and by means of the comparison sets out to determine just what the definition means. I think he will be struck by three facts that reduce the terms of the definition to such a low common denominator that little meaning is left.

He will note that the "unseen powers" referred to have been conceived in a multitude of incompatible ways. Eliminating the differences, nothing is left beyond the bare reference to something unseen and powerful. This

has been conceived as the vague and undefined Mana of the Melanesians; the Kami of primitive Shintoism; the fetish of the Africans; spirits, having some human properties, that pervade natural places and animate natural forces; the ultimate and impersonal principle of Buddhism; the unmoved mover of Greek thought; the gods and semi-divine heroes of the Greek and Roman Pantheons; the personal and loving Providence of Christianity, omnipotent, and limited by a corresponding evil power; the arbitrary Will of Moslemism; the supreme legislator and judge of deism. And these are but a few of the outstanding varieties of ways in which the invisible power has been conceived.

There is no greater similarity in the ways in which obedience and reverence have been expressed. There has been worship of animals, of ghosts, of ancestors, phallic worship, as well as of a Being of dread power and of love and wisdom. Reverence has been expressed in the human sacrifices of the Peruvians and Aztecs; the sexual orgies of some Oriental religions; exorcisms and ablutions; the offering of the humble and contrite mind of the Hebrew prophet, the elaborate rituals of the Greek and Roman Churches. Not even sacrifice has been uniform; it is highly sublimated in Protestant denominations and in Moslemism. Where it has existed it has taken all kinds of forms and been directed to a great variety of powers and spirits. It has been used for expiation, for propitiation and for buying special favors. There is no conceivable purpose for which rites have not been employed.

Finally, there is no discernible unity in the moral motivations appealed to and utilized. They have been as far apart as fear of lasting torture, hope of enduring bliss in which sexual enjoyment has sometimes been a conspicuous element; mortification of the flesh and extreme asceticism; prostitution and chastity; wars to extirpate the unbeliever; persecution to convert or punish the unbeliever, and philanthropic zeal; servile acceptance of imposed dogma, along with brotherly love and aspiration for a reign of justice among men.

I have, of course, mentioned only a sparse number of the facts which fill volumes in any well-stocked library. It may be asked by those who do not like to look upon the darker side of the history of religions why the darker facts should be brought up. We all know that civilized man has a background of bestiality and superstition and that these elements are still with us. Indeed, have not some religions, including the most influential forms of Christianity, taught that the heart of man is totally corrupt? How could the course of religion in its entire sweep not be marked by practices that are shameful in their cruelty and lustfulness, and by beliefs that are degraded and intellectually incredible? What else than what we find could be expected, in the case of people having little knowl-

edge and no secure method of knowing; with primitive institutions, and with so little control of natural forces that they lived in a constant state of fear?

I gladly admit that historic religions have been relative to the conditions of social culture in which peoples lived. Indeed, what I am concerned with is to press home the logic of this method of disposal of outgrown traits of past religions. Beliefs and practices in a religion that now prevails are by this logic relative to the present state of culture. If so much flexibility has obtained in the past regarding an unseen power, the way it affects human destiny, and the attitudes we are to take toward it, why should it be assumed that change in conception and action has now come to an end? The logic involved in getting rid of inconvenient aspects of past religions compels us to inquire how much in religions now accepted are survivals from outgrown cultures. It compels us to ask what conception of unseen powers and our relations to them would be consonant with the best achievements and aspirations of the present. It demands that in imagination we wipe the slate clean and start afresh by asking what would be the idea of the unseen, of the manner of its control over us and the ways in which reverence and obedience would be manifested, if whatever is basically religious in experience had the opportunity to express itself free from all historic encumbrances.

So we return to the elements of the definition that has been given. What boots it to accept, in defense of the universality of religion, a definition that applies equally to the most savage and degraded beliefs and practices that have related to unseen powers and to noble ideals of a religion having the greatest share of moral content? There are two points involved. One of them is that there is nothing left worth preserving in the notions of unseen powers, controlling human destiny to which obedience, reverence and worship are due, if we glide silently over the nature that has been attributed to the powers, the radically diverse ways in which they have been supposed to control human destiny, and in which submission and awe have been manifested. The other point is that when we begin to select, to choose, and say that some present ways of thinking about the unseen powers are better than others; that the reverence shown by a free and self-respecting human being is better than the servile obedience rendered to an arbitrary power by frightened men; that we should believe that control of human destiny is exercised by a wise and loving spirit rather than by madcap ghosts or sheer force—when I say, we begin to choose, we have entered upon a road that has not yet come to an end. We have reached a point that invites us to proceed farther.

For we are forced to acknowledge that concretely there is no such thing as religion in the singular. There is only a multitude of religions.

"Religion" is a strictly collective term and the collection it stands for is not even of the kind illustrated in textbooks of logic. It has not the unity of a regiment or assembly but that of any miscellaneous aggregate. Attempts to prove the universality prove too much or too little. It is probable that religions have been universal in the sense that all the peoples we know anything about have had *a* religion. But the differences among them are so great and so shocking that any common element that can be extracted is meaningless. The idea that religion is universal proves too little in that the older apologists for Christianity seem to have been better advised than some modern ones in condemning every religion but one as an impostor, as at bottom some kind of demon worship or at any rate a superstitious figment. Choice among religions is imperative, and the necessity for choice leaves nothing of any force in the argument from universality. Moreover, when once we enter upon the road of choice, there is at once presented a possibility not yet generally realized.

For the historic increase of the ethical and ideal content of religions suggests that the process of purification may be carried further. It indicates that further choice is imminent in which certain values and functions in experience may be selected. This possibility is what I had in mind in speaking of the difference between the religious and a religion. I am not proposing a religion, but rather the emancipation of elements and outlooks that may be called religious. For the moment we have a religion, whether that of the Sioux Indian or of Judaism or of Christianity, that moment the ideal factors in experience that may be called religious take on a load that is not inherent in them, a load of current beliefs and of institutional practices that are irrelevant to them.

I can illustrate what I mean by a common phenomenon in contemporary life. It is widely supposed that a person who does not accept any religion is thereby shown to be a non-religious person. Yet it is conceivable that the present depression in religion is closely connected with the fact that religions now prevent, because of their weight of historic encumbrances, the religious quality of experience from coming to consciousness and finding the expression that is appropriate to present conditions, intellectual and moral. I believe that such is the case. I believe that many persons are so repelled from what exists as a religion by its intellectual and moral implications, that they are not even aware of attitudes in themselves that if they came to fruition would be genuinely religious. I hope that this remark may help make clear what I mean by the distinction between "religion" as a noun substantive and "religious" as adjectival.

To be somewhat more explicit, a religion (and as I have just said there is no such thing as religion in general) always signifies a special body of

beliefs and practices having some kind of institutional organization, loose or tight. In contrast, the adjective "religious" denotes nothing in the way of a specifiable entity, either institutional or as a system of beliefs. It does not denote anything to which one can specifically point as one can point to this and that historic religion or existing church. For it does not denote anything that can exist by itself or that can be organized into a particular and distinctive form of existence. It denotes attitudes that may be taken toward every object and every proposed end or ideal.

Before, however, I develop my suggestion that realization of the distinction just made would operate to emancipate the religious quality from encumbrances that now smother or limit it, I must refer to a position that in some respects is similar in words to the position I have taken, but that in fact is a whole world removed from it. I have several times used the phrase "religious elements of experience." Now at present there is much talk, especially in liberal circles, of religious experience as vouching for the authenticity of certain beliefs and the desirability of certain practices, such as particular forms of prayer and worship. It is even asserted that religious experience is the ultimate basis of religion itself. The gulf between this position and that which I have taken is what I am now concerned to point out.

Those who hold to the notion that there is a definite kind of experience which is itself religious, by that very fact make out of it something specific, as a kind of experience that is marked off from experience as æsthetic, scientific, moral, political; from experience as companionship and friendship. But "religious" as a quality of experience signifies something that may belong to all these experiences. It is the polar opposite of some type of experience that can exist by itself. The distinction comes out clearly when it is noted that the concept of this distinct kind of experience is used to validate a belief in some special kind of object and also to justify some special kind of practice.

For there are many religionists who are now dissatisfied with the older "proofs" of the existence of God, those that go by the name of ontological, cosmological and teleological. The cause of the dissatisfaction is perhaps not so much the arguments that Kant used to show the insufficiency of these alleged proofs, as it is the growing feeling that they are too formal to offer any support to religion in action. Anyway, the dissatisfaction exists. Moreover, these religionists are moved by the rise of the experimental method in other fields. What is more natural and proper, accordingly, than that they should affirm they are just as good empiricists as anybody else—indeed, as good as the scientists themselves? As the latter rely upon certain kinds of experience to prove the existence of certain kinds of objects, so the religionists rely upon a certain kind of experience

to prove the existence of the object of religion, especially the supreme object, God.

The discussion may be made more definite by introducing, at this point, a particular illustration of this type of reasoning. A writer says: "I broke down from overwork and soon came to the verge of nervous prostration. One morning after a long and sleepless night . . . I resolved to stop drawing upon myself so continuously and begin drawing upon God. I determined to set apart a quiet time every day in which I could relate my life to its ultimate source, regain the consciousness that in God I live, move and have my being. That was thirty years ago. Since then I have had literally not one hour of darkness or despair."

This is an impressive record. I do not doubt its authenticity nor that of the experience related. It illustrates a religious aspect of experience. But it illustrates also the use of that quality to carry a superimposed load of a particular religion. For having been brought up in the Christian religion, its subject interprets it in the terms of the personal God characteristic of that religion. Taoists, Buddhists, Moslems, persons of no religion including those who reject all supernatural influence and power, have had experiences similar in their effect. Yet another author commenting upon the passage says: "The religious expert can be more sure that this God exists than he can of either the cosmological God of speculative surmise or the Christlike God involved in the validity of moral optimism," and goes on to add that such experiences "mean that God the savior, the power that gives victory over sin on certain conditions that man can fulfill, is an existent, accessible and scientifically knowable reality." It should be clear that this inference is sound only if the conditions, of whatever sort, that produce the effect are called "God." But most readers will take the inference to mean that the existence of a particular Being, of the type called "God" in the Christian religion, is proved by a method akin to that of experimental science.

In reality, the only thing that can be said to be "proved" is the existence of some complex of conditions that have operated to effect an adjustment in life, an orientation, that brings with it a sense of security and peace. The particular interpretation given to this complex of conditions is not inherent in the experience itself. It is derived from the culture with which particular person has been imbued. A fatalist will give one name to it; a Christian Scientist another, and the one who rejects all supernatural being still another. The determining factor in the interpretation of the experience is the particular doctrinal apparatus into which a person has been inducted. The emotional deposit connected with prior teaching floods the whole situation. It may readily confer upon the experience such a peculiarly sacred preciousness that all inquiry into its causation is barred.

The stable outcome is so invaluable that the cause to which it is referred is usually nothing but a reduplication of the thing that has occurred, plus some name that has acquired a deeply emotional quality.

The intent of this discussion is not to deny the genuineness of the result nor its importance in life. It is not, save incidentally, to point out the possibility of a purely naturalistic explanation of the event. My purpose is to indicate what happens when religious experience is already set aside as something *sui generis*. The actual religious quality in the experience described is the *effect* produced, the better adjustment in life and its conditions, not the manner and cause of its production. The way in which the experience operated, its function, determines its religious value. If the reorientation actually occurs, it, and the sense of security and stability accompanying it, are forces on their own account. It takes place in different persons in a multitude of ways. It is sometimes brought about by devotion to a cause; sometimes by a passage of poetry that opens a new perspective; sometimes as was the case with Spinoza—deemed an atheist in his day—through philosophical reflection.

The difference between an experience having a religious force because of what it does in and to the processes of living and religious experience as a separate kind of thing gives me occasion to refer to a previous remark. If this function were rescued through emancipation from dependence upon specific types of beliefs and practices, from those elements that constitute a religion, many individuals would find that experiences having the force of bringing about a better, deeper and enduring adjustment in life are not so rare and infrequent as they are commonly supposed to be. They occur frequently in connection with many significant moments of living. The idea of invisible powers would take on the meaning of all the conditions of nature and human association that support and deepen the sense of values which carry one through periods of darkness and despair to such an extent that they lose their usual depressive character.

I do not suppose for many minds the dislocation of the religious from a religion is easy to effect. Tradition and custom, especially when emotionally charged, are a part of the habits that have become one with our very being. But the possibility of the transfer is demonstrated by its actuality. Let us then for the moment drop the term "religious," and ask what are the attitudes that lend deep and enduring support to the processes of living. I have, for example, used the words "adjustment" and "orientation." What do they signify?

While the words "accommodation," "adaptation," and "adjustment" are frequently employed as synonyms, attitudes exist that are so different that for the sake of clear thought they should be discriminated. There are conditions we meet that cannot be changed. If they are particular and

limited, we modify our own particular attitudes in accordance with them. Thus we accommodate ourselves to changes in weather, to alterations in income when we have no other recourse. When the external conditions are lasting we become inured, habituated, or, as the process is now often called, conditioned. The two main traits of this attitude, which I should like to call accommodation, are that it affects *particular* modes of conduct, not the entire self, and that the process is mainly *passive*. It may, however, become general and then it becomes fatalistic resignation or submission. There are other attitudes toward the environment that are also particular but that are more active. We re-act against conditions and endeavor to change them to meet our wants and demands. Plays in a foreign language are "adapted" to meet the needs of an American audience. A house is rebuilt to suit changed conditions of the household; the telephone is invented to serve the demand for speedy communication at a distance; dry soils are irrigated so that they may bear abundant crops. Instead of accommodating ourselves to conditions, we modify conditions so that they will be accommodated to our wants and purposes. This process may be called adaptation.

Now both of these processes are often called by the more general name of adjustment. But there are also changes in ourselves in relation to the world in which we live that are much more inclusive and deep seated. They relate not to this and that want in relation to this and that condition of our surroundings, but pertain to our being in its entirety. Because of their scope, this modification of ourselves is enduring. It lasts through any amount of vicissitude of circumstances, internal and external. There is a composing and harmonizing of the various elements of our being such that, in spite of changes in the special conditions that surround us, these conditions are also arranged, settled, in relation to us. This attitude includes a note of submission. But it is voluntary, not externally imposed; and as voluntary it is something more than a mere Stoical resolution to endure unperturbed throughout the buffetings of fortune. It is more outgoing, more ready and glad, than the latter attitude, and it is more active than the former. And in calling it voluntary, it is not meant that it depends upon a particular resolve or volition. It is a change *of* will conceived as the organic plenitude of our being, rather than any special change *in* will.

It is the claim of religions that they effect this generic and enduring change in attitude. I should like to turn the statement around and say that whenever this change takes place there is a definitely religious attitude. It is not *a* religion that brings it about, but when it occurs, from whatever cause and by whatever means, there is a religious outlook and function. As I have said before, the doctrinal or intellectual apparatus



and the institutional accretions that grow up are, in a strict sense, adventitious to the intrinsic quality of such experiences. For they are affairs of the traditions of the culture with which individuals are inoculated. Mr. Santayana has connected the religious quality of experience with the imaginative, as that is expressed in poetry. "Religion and poetry," he says, "are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs. Poetry is called religion when it intervenes in life, and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is seen to be nothing but poetry." The difference between intervening *in* and supervening *upon* is as important as is the identity set forth. Imagination may play upon life or it may enter profoundly into it. As Mr. Santayana puts it, "poetry has a universal and a moral function," for "its highest power lies in its relevance to the ideals and purposes of life." Except as it intervenes, "all observation is observation of brute fact, all discipline is mere repression, until these facts digested and this discipline embodied in humane impulses become the starting point for a creative movement of the imagination, the firm basis for ideal constructions in society, religion, and art."

If I may make a comment upon this penetrating insight of Mr. Santayana, I would say that the difference between imagination that only supervenes and imagination that intervenes is the difference between one that completely interpenetrates all the elements of our being and one that is interwoven with only special and partial factors. There actually occurs extremely little observation of brute facts merely for the sake of the facts, just as there is little discipline that is repression and nothing but repression. Facts are usually observed with reference to some practical end and purpose, and that end is presented only imaginatively. The most repressive discipline has some end in view to which there is at least imputed an ideal quality; otherwise it is purely sadistic. But in such cases of observation and discipline imagination is limited and partial. It does not extend far; it does not permeate deeply and widely.

The connection between imagination and the harmonizing of the self is closer than is usually thought. The idea of a whole, whether of the whole personal being or of the world, is an imaginative, not a literal, idea. The limited world of our observation and reflection becomes the Universe only through imaginative extension. It cannot be apprehended in knowledge nor realized in reflection. Neither observation, thought, nor practical activity can attain that complete unification of the self which is called a whole. The *whole* self is an ideal, an imaginative projection. Hence the idea of a thoroughgoing and deepseated harmonizing of the self with the Universe (as a name for the totality of conditions with which the self is connected) operates only through imagination—which

is one reason why this composing of the self is not voluntary in the sense of an act of special volition or resolution. An "adjustment" possesses the will rather than is its express product. Religionists have been right in thinking of it as an influx from sources beyond conscious deliberation and purpose—a fact that helps explain, psychologically, why it has so generally been attributed to a supernatural source and that, perhaps, throws some light upon the reference of it by William James to unconscious factors. And it is pertinent to note that the unification of the self throughout the ceaseless flux of what it does, suffers, and achieves, cannot be attained in terms of itself. The self is always directed toward something beyond itself and so its own unification depends upon the idea of the integration of the shifting scenes of the world into that imaginative totality we call the Universe.

The intimate connection of imagination with ideal elements in experience is generally recognized. Such is not the case with respect to its connection with faith. The latter has been regarded as a substitute for knowledge, for sight. It is defined, in the Christian religion, as *evidence* of things not seen. The implication is that faith is a kind of anticipatory vision of things that are now invisible because of the limitations of our finite and erring nature. Because it is a substitute for knowledge, its material and object are intellectual in quality. As John Locke summed up the matter, faith is "assent to a proposition . . . on the credit of its proposer." Religious faith is then given to a body of propositions as true on the credit of their supernatural author, reason coming in to demonstrate the reasonableness of giving such credit. Of necessity there results the development of theologies, or bodies of systematic propositions, to make explicit in organized form the content of the propositions to which belief is attached and assent given. Given the point of view, those who hold that religion necessarily implies a theology are correct.

But belief or faith has also a moral and practical import. Even devils, according to the older theologians, believe—and tremble. A distinction was made, therefore, between "speculative" or intellectual belief and an act called "justifying" faith. Apart from any theological context, there is a difference between belief that is a conviction that some end should be supreme over conduct, and belief that some object or being exists as a truth for the intellect. Conviction in the moral sense signifies being conquered, vanquished, in our active nature by an ideal end; it signifies acknowledgment of its rightful claim over our desires and purposes. Such acknowledgment is practical, not primarily intellectual. It goes beyond evidence that can be presented to *any* possible observer. Reflection, often long and arduous, may be involved in arriving at the conviction, but the import of thought is not exhausted in discovery of evidence that can

justify intellectual assent. The authority of an ideal over choice and conduct is the authority of an ideal, not of a fact, of a truth guaranteed to intellect, not of the status of the one who propounds the truth.

Such moral faith is not easy. It was questioned of old whether the Son of Man should find faith on the earth in his coming. Moral faith has been bolstered by all sorts of arguments intended to prove that its object is not ideal and that its claim upon us is not primarily moral or practical, since the ideal in question is already embedded in the existent frame of things. It is argued that the ideal is already the final reality at the heart of things that exist, and that only our senses or the corruption of our natures prevent us from apprehending its prior existential being. Starting, say, from such an idea as that justice is more than a moral ideal because it is embedded in the very make-up of the actually existent world, men have gone on to build up vast intellectual schemes, philosophies, and theologies, to prove that ideals are real not as ideals but as antecedently existing actualities. They have failed to see that in converting moral realities into matters of intellectual assent they have evinced lack of *moral* faith. Faith that something should be in existence as far as lies in our power is changed into the intellectual belief that it is already in existence. When physical existence does not bear out the assertion, the physical is subtly changed into the metaphysical. In this way, moral faith has been inextricably tied up with intellectual beliefs about the supernatural.

The tendency to convert ends of moral faith and action into articles of an intellectual creed has been furthered by a tendency of which psychologists are well aware. What we ardently desire to have thus and so, we tend to believe is already so. Desire has a powerful influence upon intellectual beliefs. Moreover, when conditions are adverse to realization of the objects of our desire—and in the case of significant ideals they are extremely adverse—it is an easy way out to assume that after all they are already embodied in the ultimate structure of what is, and that appearances to the contrary are *merely* appearances. Imagination then merely supervenes and is freed from the responsibility for intervening. Weak natures take to reverie as a refuge as strong ones do to fanaticism. Those who dissent are mourned over by the first class and converted through the use of force by the second.

What has been said does not imply that all moral faith in ideal ends is by virtue of that fact religious in quality. The religious is "morality touched by emotion" only when the ends of moral conviction arouse emotions that are not only intense but are actuated and supported by ends so inclusive that they unify the self. The inclusiveness of the end in relation to both self and the "universe" to which an inclusive self is related is indispensable. According to the best authorities, "religion" comes from

a root that means being bound or tied. Originally, it meant being bound by vows to a particular way of life—as *les religieux* were monks and nuns who had assumed certain vows. The religious attitude signifies something that is bound through imagination to a *general* attitude. This comprehensive attitude, moreover, is much broader than anything indicated by “moral” in its usual sense. The quality of attitude is displayed in art, science and good citizenship.

If we apply the conception set forth to the terms of the definition earlier quoted, these terms take on a new significance. An unseen power controlling our destiny becomes the power of an ideal. All possibilities, as possibilities, are ideal in character. The artist, scientist, citizen, parent, as far as they are actuated by the spirit of their callings, are controlled by the unseen. For all endeavor for the better is moved by faith in what is possible, not by adherence to the actual. Nor does this faith depend for its moving power upon intellectual assurance or belief that the things worked for must surely prevail and come into embodied existence. For the authority of the object to determine our attitude and conduct, the right that is given it to claim our allegiance and devotion is based on the intrinsic nature of the ideal. The outcome, given our best endeavor, is not with us. The inherent vice of all intellectual schemes of idealism is that they convert the idealism of action into a system of beliefs about antecedent reality. The character assigned this reality is so different from that which observation and reflection lead to and support that these schemes inevitably glide into alliance with the supernatural.

All religions, marked by elevated ideal quality, have dwelt upon the power of religion to introduce perspective into the piecemeal and shifting episodes of existence. Here too we need to reverse the ordinary statement and say that whatever introduces genuine perspective is religious, not that religion is something that introduces it. There can be no doubt (referring to the second element of the definition) of our dependence upon forces beyond our control. Primitive man was so impotent in the face of these forces that, especially in an unfavorable natural environment, fear became a dominant attitude, and, as the old saying goes, fear created the gods.

With increase of mechanisms of control, the element of fear has, relatively speaking, subsided. Some optimistic souls have even concluded that the forces about us are on the whole essentially benign. But every crisis, whether of the individual or of the community, reminds man of the precarious and partial nature of the control he exercises. When man, individually and collectively, has done his uttermost, conditions that at different times and places have given rise to the ideas of Fate and Fortune, of Chance and Providence, remain. It is the part of manliness to insist

upon the capacity of mankind to strive to direct natural and social forces to humane ends. But unqualified absolutistic statements about the omnipotence of such endeavors reflect egoism rather than intelligent courage.

The fact that human destiny is so interwoven with forces beyond human control renders it unnecessary to suppose that dependence and the humility that accompanies it have to find the particular channel that is prescribed by traditional doctrines. What is especially significant is rather the form which the sense of dependence takes. Fear never gave stable perspective in the life of anyone. It is dispersive and withdrawing. Most religions have in fact added rites of communion to those of expiation and propitiation. For our dependence is manifested in those relations to the environment that support our undertakings and aspirations as much as it is in the defeats inflicted upon us. The essentially unreligious attitude is that which attributes human achievement and purpose to man in isolation from the world of physical nature and his fellows. Our successes are dependent upon the coöperation of nature. The sense of the dignity of human nature is as religious as is the sense of awe and reverence when it rests upon a sense of human nature as a coöperating part of a larger whole. Natural piety is not of necessity either a fatalistic acquiescence in natural happenings or a romantic idealization of the world. It may rest upon a just sense of nature as the whole of which we are parts, while it also recognizes that we are parts that are marked by intelligence and purpose, having the capacity to strive by their aid to bring conditions into greater consonance with what is humanly desirable. Such piety is an inherent constituent of a just perspective in life.

Understanding and knowledge also enter into a perspective that is religious in quality. Faith in the continued disclosing of truth through directed coöperative human endeavor is more religious in quality than is any faith in a completed revelation. It is of course now usual to hold that revelation is not completed in the sense of being ended. But religions hold that the essential framework is settled in its significant moral features at least, and that new elements that are offered must be judged by conformity to this framework. Some fixed doctrinal apparatus is necessary for a religion. But faith in the possibilities of continued and rigorous inquiry does not limit access to truth to any channel or scheme of things. It does not first say that truth is universal and then add there is but one road to it. It does not depend for assurance upon subjection to any dogma or item of doctrine. It trusts that the natural interactions between man and his environment will breed more intelligence and generate more knowledge provided the scientific methods that define intelligence in operation are pushed further into the mysteries of the world, being

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themselves promoted and improved in the operation. There is such a thing as faith in intelligence becoming religious in quality—a fact that perhaps explains the efforts of some religionists to disparage the possibilities of intelligence as a force. They properly feel such faith to be a dangerous rival.

Lives that are consciously inspired by loyalty to such ideals as have been mentioned are still comparatively infrequent to the extent of that comprehensiveness and intensity which arouse an ardor religious in function. But before we infer the incompetency of such ideals and of the actions they inspire, we should at least ask ourselves how much of the existing situation is due to the fact that the religious factors of experience have been drafted into supernatural channels and thereby loaded with irrelevant encumbrances. A body of beliefs and practices that are apart from the common and natural relations of mankind must, in the degree in which it is influential, weaken and sap the force of the possibilities inherent in such relations. Here lies one aspect of the emancipation of the religious from religion.

Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality. Many a person, inquirer, artist, philanthropist, citizen, men and women in the humblest walks of life, have achieved, without presumption and without display, such unification of themselves and of their relations to the conditions of existence. It remains to extend their spirit and inspiration to ever wider numbers. If I have said anything about religions and religion that seems harsh, I have said those things because of a firm belief that the claim on the part of religions to possess a monopoly of ideals and of the supernatural means by which alone, it is alleged, they can be furthered, stands in the way of the realization of distinctively religious values inherent in natural experience. For that reason, if for no other, I should be sorry if any were misled by the frequency with which I have employed the adjective "religious" to conceive of what I have said as a disguised apology for what have passed as religions. The opposition between religious values as I conceive them and religions is not to be bridged. Just because the release of these values is so important, their identification with the creeds and cults of religions must be dissolved.

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